

A photograph of several women in a professional setting, possibly a conference or networking event. One woman in the center is smiling and looking towards the right. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a bright light source.

sh=qual

ADVERTISING EQUALITY

Project *Evaluation*

June 2024



Women's
Health Vic





About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria is a statewide, feminist, non-profit organisation working with government, the health sector, and the community to improve health outcomes for women (cis and trans inclusive) and gender diverse people. We advocate for healthcare rights and access, deliver health promotion resources, and operate vital information and support services, so that all Victorians have the opportunity to access optimal health and wellbeing, free from bias and discrimination.



This report was prepared by Trezona Consulting Group for Women's Health Victoria



shEqual was supported by the Victorian Government

Acknowledgement of Country

Women's Health Victoria acknowledges and pays our respects to the Traditional Owners of the land that our offices are situated on, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. As a statewide organisation, we also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across Victoria. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past and present.

Artist: Madison Connors - Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Gamilaroi



Our Commitment to Gender Diversity & Inclusion

Women's Health Victoria's focus is women (cis and trans inclusive) and gender diverse people. We address feminist health issues and are committed to supporting all people impacted by gender inequity who can benefit from our work. As a proud intersectional feminist organisation, Women's Health Victoria is working towards meaningful inclusivity, guided by and supporting people who identify as women, trans, intersex and gender diverse.

Executive Summary	5
Evaluation	6
Evaluation findings	7
Conclusion and recommendations	10
1. Introduction	12
1.1. Sexism and gender inequality in advertising	13
1.2. Project approach and objectives	13
1.3. Project strategies	14
2. Project evaluation	17
2.1. Evaluation aim and questions	18
2.2. Evaluation methods and activities	18
Limitations	21
3. Evaluation findings	22
3.1. Effectiveness and efficiency	23
3.2. Impact	49
3.3. Strengths and benefits	55
3.4. Challenges and limitations	58
4. Conclusion and recommendations	67
4.1. Conclusion	68
4.2. Recommendations	69
Appendix 1: shEqual’s Theory of Change	ii
Appendix 2: shEqual Consultation Guide (Project Staff)	iii
Appendix 3: shEqual Consultation Guide (Reference Group)	v
Appendix 4: shEqual Consultation Guide (Grassroots)	vii
Appendix 5: shEqual Impact Survey 2023	ix

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

shEqual is a primary prevention initiative managed by Women's Health Victoria (WHV) and funded by the Victorian Government. The initiative is the only one of its kind in Australia. It uses a settings-based, whole of system approach to promote gender equality in advertising settings, and to address the gendered drivers of violence against women.

The shEqual initiative's key project objectives were to:

1. Establish a sound evidence-base for primary prevention in the advertising setting
2. Increase understanding among stakeholders of the role/contribution of sexist advertising to gender inequality and violence against women
3. Mobilise and support industry and community engagement in action to promote gender equity in advertising and prevent violence against women
4. Build the capacity of ad agencies to promote gender equality and provide safe and respectful workplaces.

Evaluation

WHV commissioned Trezona Consulting Group (TCG) to undertake an independent evaluation. The evaluation covers the 2020-2024 implementation period and seeks to address the following:

- What is the evidence of the project's progress towards its stated objectives and expected outcomes, including alignment between the program, its output, and departmental objectives and Government priorities?
- Has WHV demonstrated efficiency in the delivery of the project?
- How has the project work, including industry engagement, impacted gender equality in the advertising sector?
- To what extent has the project successfully engaged the advertising sector and what learnings can be drawn from it to enhance the work of gender equality/prevention violence against women sector in engaging new industries?

Evaluation activities commenced in March 2023 and included developing a Theory of Change with project stakeholders, reviewing project documentation, developing and implementing surveys, interviews and focus groups, and analysing quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 12 people participated in qualitative evaluation activities, and 97 people responded to the shEqual Impact Survey 2023. Forty-five training surveys were also analysed for this evaluation.

Evaluation findings

Effectiveness and efficiency

1

The shEqual initiative demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in its implementation by successfully delivering extensive activities and achieving good reach across its strategy areas as intended, as evidenced through the direct engagement of over 2,000 industry professionals and other stakeholders through project governance, research and capacity building activities, digital engagement of 238,844 stakeholders through social media accounts, including followers, content and campaign interactions, 4,210 downloads of its research, resources and tools, and interest from key influencers and decision makers including Federal Members of Parliament in its recent advocacy efforts.



The shEqual initiative's activities and outputs are aligned with and make a significant contribution to key state and federal strategies to achieve gender equality and prevent gender-based violence, including the Victorian Government's strategy for gender equality, Our Equal State, and the Australian Government's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2022-32) and First Action Plan (2023-27), and Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality.

2



3

The shEqual initiative has demonstrated efficient use of its financial resources by using its funding as intended and successfully delivering on planned activities and outputs.

As the only initiative of its kind in Australia, shEqual has demonstrated value for money through its contribution to policy priorities and outcomes, establishment of relationships with industry professionals, its efficient and cost-effective design and implementation, and the establishment of an online resource hub that provides ongoing benefits.

4



5

The shEqual initiative has either partially or fully achieved its four objectives:

- shEqual has successfully achieved its first objective to establish the evidence-base for promoting gender equality in advertising. The initiative consulted more than 700 industry professionals and published seven reports which contributed new evidence to the field.
- shEqual has made progress on objective two by increasing awareness and understanding of the link between sexist advertising, gender inequality and violence against women among industry stakeholders directly involved in the initiative.
- shEqual has made substantial progress on objective three in relation to industry engagement. It has successfully supported existing champions to take action to promote gender equality and built momentum for a movement for change. Work to support community action has been limited to date due to resourcing constraints.
- While objective four has not been fully achieved, progress is underway to support to agencies to improve the workplace systems and processes needed to fully realise it. Key resources have been developed to support this work, such as training packages and workplace gender equity audit tools.

Impact

1. Through its advocacy, the shEqual initiative influenced the ACA and AANA to adopt changes to advertising industry policy and regulations. This is a key success of the shEqual initiative.
2. The shEqual initiative has contributed to a shift in the discourse around gender equality in the advertising industry. The shEqual National Survey 2020 was a key driver of this change.
3. The shEqual initiative's impact on workplace culture has been limited.
4. The shEqual initiative's impact on gender equality in ads is unclear, with varying perceptions among stakeholders.
5. Achieving gender equality takes time and requires long-term commitment and investment.



Strengths and benefits

shEqual's key strengths and benefits were:

- i) involving industry professionals in its governance structures;
- ii) government support and commitment,
- iii) the impartial status of WHV as the lead organisation; and
- iv) the research, rigour and expertise of the project team.

Challenges and limitations

The key challenges that limited the shEqual initiative's capacity to achieve its objectives, progress gender equal content creation and inclusive workplaces, and to engage more broadly with industry were:

- i) resistance and backlash within the industry;
- ii) uptake and implementation of the initiative's research and resources
- iii) branding and messaging;
- iv) the initiative's scope of focus and influence; and
- v) resourcing and capacity.

Conclusion and recommendations

As the only dedicated, evidence-based initiative in Australia working with the advertising industry to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence, the shEqual initiative is creating a unique settings-based movement for change and presents a feasible approach to do so. The momentum and relationships built through the initiative, the research, resources, and tools produced, and the team's expertise and skillset could be effectively leveraged to expand the shEqual initiative to achieve industry-wide change, with significant implications for gender equality. The following recommendations are based on the evaluation findings:

Funding

Secure long-term and ongoing funding for the shEqual initiative to maintain existing partnerships and momentum, build on successes to date and achieve sustained change across the three pillars identified in *Seeing is Believing*.

Policy and regulation

Expand the shEqual initiative's remit to include all forms of advertising and paid content, noting the importance of online and social media advertising and influencers in the context of harmful advertising.

Broaden the shEqual initiative's scope to include harmful advertising targeted to men that includes rigid and limiting male stereotypes.

Capitalise on momentum built in 2024 engaging key influencers and decision makers, including Federal Members of Parliament and stakeholders with public profile, to continue raising awareness of the impacts of sexist ads and lead advocacy work to generate support for and drive legislative and regulatory reform.

Ensure the shEqual initiative aligns and contributes to key federal government policy frameworks, including the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 and Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality, as well as reforms to address online harms and other advertising regulation, such as gambling.

Continue to undertake relevant research to support legislative and regulatory change, including an analysis of current regulatory codes and community/industry consultation on other proposed models of regulation.

Communications

Develop a comprehensive communication strategy and plan in consultation with industry professionals that articulates clear key messages to be embedded across all communications, identifies targeted audiences for specific activities to recognise the breadth and diversity within the industry and the need for tailored approaches, and which contains clear guidance on the voice and tone to be used in communications.

Rebrand the initiative so that it is inclusive and does not reinforce gender binaries.

Industry engagement and partnerships

Continue momentum built in 2024 through capacity building activities, including Gender Equality in Advertising and Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces training packages, and harness existing policy levers to drive industry engagement with the shEqual initiative as an available resource to support the industry to meet existing obligations, including under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Build on, formalise and expand partnerships with grassroots gender equity initiatives to coordinate collaborative action and develop and implement industry campaigns.

Develop initiatives to engage men in the industry, such as allyship programs.

Implement an industry award and ceremony for progressive portrayals in advertising and/or a scorecard system for gender equality in advertising to showcase good practice examples.

Continue momentum built in 2024 through capacity building activities, including Gender Equality in Advertising and Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces training packages, and harness existing policy levers to drive industry engagement with the shEqual initiative as an available resource to support the industry to meet existing obligations, including under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Monitoring and evaluation

Subject to sufficient longer-term funding, build the evidence-base demonstrating the frequency of exposure to harmful ads, and how this contributes harmful attitudes and behaviours, and poorer health outcomes.

Review and refresh the shEqual initiative's objectives as needed to ensure that they are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound for effective evaluation, and consider separating out objectives for industry and community engagement.

Use the Theory of Change to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan with a strengthened focus on impact measures and outcomes, and including appropriate systems for streamlined and consistent program monitoring and evaluation.

1

Introduction

1.1. Sexism and gender inequality in advertising

When limited ideas and stereotypes about gender are used in advertising they can contribute significantly to gender inequality, discrimination and exclusion, which creates the social conditions that drive and enable men's use of violence against women. Emerging evidence also shows that the use of gender stereotypes and reliance on sexually objectifying images in advertising undermines efforts to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women in Australia¹. Recognising this, the Victorian Government has funded Women's Health Victoria (WHV) to deliver projects on gender equality in advertising for the past six years, including the shEqual initiative.

1.2. Project approach and objectives

Launched in 2020, the shEqual initiative recognises the advertising industry's potential to change the narrative on gender equality, and to ensure that the ads we see every day are representative, real and empowering, rather than harmful, to the people who view them. A primary prevention initiative, shEqual takes a whole of system approach to promote gender equality in advertising content and workplaces, and to address the gendered drivers of violence against women².

The only initiative of its kind in Australia, shEqual has a strong focus on developing the evidence-base on sexism in advertising, raising awareness and understanding of the problem, and building a movement for change through direct engagement and partnerships with industry professionals. shEqual was developed and implemented using a phased approach, as shown in Figure 1.

The shEqual initiative's key objectives were to:

- Establish a sound evidence-base for primary prevention in the advertising setting
- Increase understanding among stakeholders of the role/contribution of sexist advertising to gender inequality and violence against women
- Mobilise and support industry and community engagement in action to promote gender equity in advertising and prevent violence against women
- Build the capacity of ad agencies to promote gender equality and provide safe and respectful workplaces.

1 Gurrieri, L., McKenzie, M. & Bugden, M. (2019), *Community Responses to Gender Portrayals in Advertising: A Research Paper*, Melbourne: Women's Health Victoria.

2 *The gendered drivers of violence against women identified in Change the Story are condoning of violence against women; men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life; rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity; and male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.*

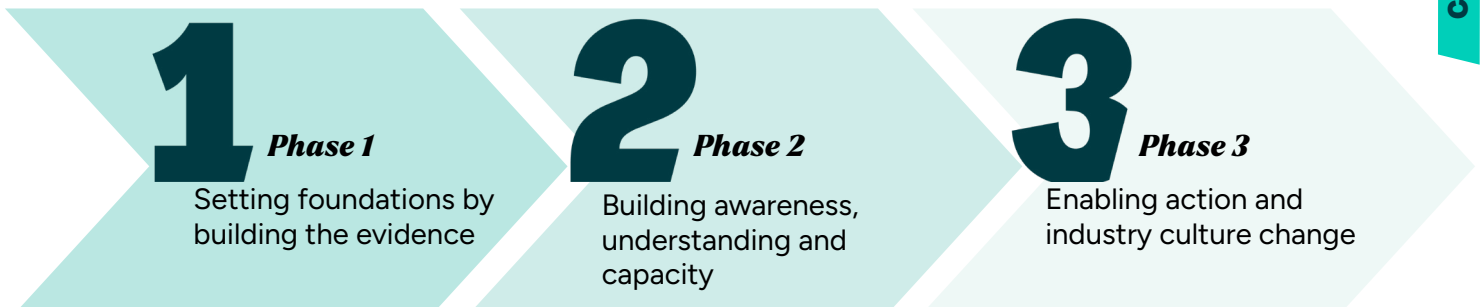


Table 1: Project strategies description – development and implementation

The shEqual initiative's key objectives were to:

- Establish a sound evidence-base for primary prevention in the advertising setting
- Increase understanding among stakeholders of the role/contribution of sexist advertising to gender inequality and violence against women
- Mobilise and support industry and community engagement in action to promote gender equity in advertising and prevent violence against women
- Build the capacity of ad agencies to promote gender equality and provide safe and respectful workplaces.



1.3. Project strategies

The shEqual initiative's key strategies were research and evidence, a strategic action framework, partnerships and engagement, resource development, capacity building, communications and campaigns, and policy advocacy. Table 1 summarises their development and implementation.

Table 1: Project strategies description – development and implementation

Strategy	Description
<i>Research and evidence</i>	<p>The shEqual initiative generated and applied research and evidence, which has underpinned its approach through all stages of implementation. The initiative used existing research and evidence in its design and implementation, including its strategic action framework Seeing is Believing, and formed partnerships to generate new research on gender inequality and sexism in the advertising industry.</p>
<i>Strategic action framework: Seeing is Believing</i>	<p>shEqual developed its strategic action framework, Seeing is Believing, in consultation with more than 40 industry leaders. It was a call to action to the advertising industry, governments, regulators, advocates and communities to harness the power of advertising to create a more gender equal and inclusive society.</p> <p>Seeing is Believing provides the industry with a blueprint for strategic action across three key pillars: i) Industry culture change; ii) Empowering communities; and iii) Regulation and policy.</p> <p>Seeing is Believing also provided the guiding framework for developing and implementing all other activities delivered as part of the shEqual initiative.</p>
<i>Facilitating partnerships and engagement</i>	<p>The shEqual initiative engaged and developed partnerships with industry bodies, professionals and agencies. This was done through direct partnerships, research and consultation, training, running industry events, tailored communications and campaigns.</p> <p>Industry engagement was crucial to broker relationships with advertising agencies and guide the initiative's implementation. This included an overarching reference group which formed part of the project governance structure, and project specific working groups.</p> <p>The shEqual initiative also facilitated collaborative partnership activities with grassroots industry organisations and initiatives.</p>

Strategy

Description

Developing resources

The shEqual initiative developed several tools and resources to support industry professionals to take practical action to progress gender equality in advertising settings. These resources were developed using research and evidence, and in consultation with industry professionals.

Building capacity and capability

The shEqual initiative provided training and capacity building to improve the knowledge and the impacts of sexist advertising on gender inequality and violence against women among advertising professionals, and build their confidence and skills to promote gender equality. Activities included the Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces Training, Gender Equality in Ads Training, and leadership forums and events.

Communications and campaigns

The shEqual initiative developed and utilised communications and campaigns to build and promote its brand, support industry engagement, and promote its research, resources and activities.

The shEqual campaign officially launched at a virtual event in November 2020. The event marked the launch of the shEqual website and its digital assets, including a branded video and Instagram and LinkedIn accounts.

Supporting policy change

Policy and advocacy activities were undertaken to influence system change and generate support from the industry to champion gender equality in advertising. This included a submission to the industry regulator recommending changes to regulations of the advertising industry.

2 Project evaluation

2.1. Evaluation aim and questions

The evaluation aim was to determine the impact of the shEqual initiative on gender equality in the advertising setting. The evaluation covers the 2020-2024 implementation period (phase 2 and phase 3 of the initiative), and seeks to address the following questions:

Strategy	Description
<i>Effectiveness</i>	What is the evidence of the project's progress towards its stated objectives and expected outcomes, including alignment between the program, its output, and departmental objectives and Government priorities?
<i>Efficiency</i>	Has WHV demonstrated efficiency in the delivery of the project?
<i>Impact</i>	How has the project work, including industry engagement, impacted gender equality in the advertising sector?
<i>Engagement</i>	To what extent has the project successfully engaged the advertising sector and what learnings can be drawn from it to enhance the work of gender equality/prevention violence against women sector in engaging new industries?

2.2. Evaluation methods and activities

WHV commissioned Trezona Consulting Group (TCG) to undertake an independent evaluation of the shEqual initiative. We commenced evaluation activities in March 2023, including collaborative development of a Theory of Change with project stakeholders, reviewing project documentation, developing research tools, administering surveys, facilitating focus groups and interviews, and analysing quantitative and qualitative data.

2.2.1. *Theory of Change*

The Theory of Change (Appendix 1) was developed through an iterative and collaborative process. This involved reviewing and analysing project documentation, and then facilitating workshops with the shEqual Project Reference Group to test assumptions and refine ideas about the key project strategies, and its intended impacts and outcomes. We used the information gained through this process to develop a draft Theory of Change, which went through several subsequent review rounds with WHV staff to refine and finalise it.

The Theory of Change provided the framework for this evaluation, and informed the development of relevant methods, data collection tools and indicators for addressing the evaluation questions.

2.2. Document review

We reviewed and analysed several documents to inform our evaluation of the shEqual initiative, including project plans, progress and acquittal reports to the funder, and meeting agendas and minutes. This provided data on the number and types of activities delivered, the number and types of participants involved, the mechanisms through which they were engaged, timeframes for project activities, and any barriers and enablers to project participation and implementation.

2.3. Data collection

A mixed methods approach was used for data collection, drawing on existing data sources and implementing new methods to provide a range of participation options and enable both a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the initiative. We developed several data collection tools to support this process, including a monitoring system for process data; consultation guides for project staff (Appendix 2), stakeholders involved in the initiative via the Project Reference Group (Appendix 3), and stakeholders involved in industry grassroots initiatives (Appendix 4); and the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 (Appendix 5).

The interview and focus group guides were informed by the program objectives and key evaluation questions. The topics covered included the initiative's impact, strengths and limitations, industry engagement and awareness, opportunities for improvement and future priorities.

The shEqual Impact Survey 2023 was informed by the shEqual Survey 2021, with sections added to assess the reach and impact of the shEqual initiative and its component activities.

Data collection activities included:

- Review of project documentation and extraction of relevant data, including from pilot and online training evaluation surveys
- One focus group with project staff
- Six interviews with stakeholders involved in the shEqual initiative
- A survey on the impact of the shEqual initiative administered to industry professionals
- Logging project events and activities

- Collation of website and social media analytics.

Data for the initiative and presented in the evaluation findings was collected up until 30 April 2024. Data collected after 30 April 2024 has not been included in this evaluation.

2.4. Recruitment

Recruitment for qualitative data collection methods was purposeful and targeted. Project staff were invited to participate in a focus group. Project staff then facilitated recruitment of industry professionals and other gender equity practitioners involved in the initiative to participate in interviews and focus groups.

The shEqual Impact Survey 2023 was administered via Survey Monkey and promoted by shEqual project staff and Reference Group members through their networks and at shEqual activities and events.

2.5. Participants

Participants in qualitative data collection activities were all stakeholders of the shEqual initiative. A total of 12 people participated, including four WHV project staff, and eight gender equity practitioners and industry professionals involved in shEqual via the Project Reference Group.

The shEqual Impact Survey 2023 was tailored to, and completed by, stakeholders working in advertising settings, and who may or may not have been involved with the shEqual initiative. A total of 97 people responded to the survey. Of these,

- 88.7% were women
- 19.6% were culturally diverse
- 10.3% were LGBTIQ+
- 7.2% live with disability
- 74.2% were based in Victoria
- 17.5% were based in NSW
- 5.2% were based in QLD

Respondents were predominantly from advertising or creative agencies (68%), in a creative role (41.2%), and held senior positions (69%).

2.6. Data analysis

The focus group and interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Rev transcription software. The transcripts generated by Rev were then validated against the audio-recording to ensure their accuracy. Qualitative data was analysed using an iterative coding process to identify key themes relating to the shEqual initiative and its effectiveness, efficiency, impact and engagement.

Survey data and project documentation were analysed using basic descriptive analysis. This data was also used to assess the shEqual initiative's effectiveness, efficiency, impact and engagement.

While there was a total of 97 responses to the shEqual Impact Survey 2023, only 63 participants completed the survey. Where data from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 is

included in the report and the response rate to the question being referenced was lower than 97, this will be footnoted.

There was also a total of 35 Gender Equality in Advertising training evaluation surveys and 10 Gender Equality in Advertising Workplace training evaluation surveys which were analysed and included in this evaluation. The Gender Equality in Advertising surveys are comprised of 15 evaluation survey responses from the pilot module, which was held in 2021, and 20 from the online module, which was launched in 2023. Data from the pilot and online training evaluation surveys have been aggregated where possible. The Gender Equality in Advertising Workplace surveys included in this evaluation were all completed by people who participated in the online training module. Where data from these surveys is included in the report and the response rate to a question was lower than the overall survey response rate, or where data is not available, this will be footnoted.

Limitations

This evaluation had some limitations regarding the availability and reliability of data. Firstly, the shEqual initiative received funding from multiple sources over the evaluation period, with varying monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. Monitoring and evaluation of the initiative has thus occurred in line with these requirements rather than according to one comprehensive evaluation framework (prior to the development of the Theory of Change in 2023).

Secondly, some evaluation activities had very low response rates and were not included in the final evaluation. The overall sample size of evaluation participants was also small, meaning that it is difficult to extrapolate and generalise the findings to the industry more broadly. As a result of these multiple factors, the overall availability and reliability of some evaluation data has been limited.

Thirdly, applying financial efficiency measures to investment in primary prevention programs is challenging. Such evaluations tend to emphasise short-term impacts, despite primary prevention initiatives addressing structural and upstream determinants of health that may take many years to achieve their intended benefits and outcomes. Significant work is required to develop appropriate methodologies in this area³.

Finally, it is difficult to attribute change, particularly social change on issues such as gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence, to any one program. Knowledge, practice, behaviours and attitudes can all change for a myriad of reasons, and not just in response to a structured program⁴. People's level of social connection, motivation and confidence to change, media and/or public interest in an issue, and broader trends at local, national and global levels can all contribute to change, or resistance to change⁵. The complexity of such programs and the associated evaluations thus requires long-term investment and commitment to measure change.

3 *Respect Victoria, (2021). Free From Violence: Monitoring and evaluation strategic framework. Melbourne: Respect Victoria.*

4 *Bauman, A. & Nutbeam, D. (2013). Evaluation in a nutshell: a practical guide to the evaluation of health promotion programs (3rd ed.). Sydney: McGraw Hill.*

5 *Bauman, A. & Nutbeam, D. (2013). Evaluation in a nutshell: a practical guide to the evaluation of health promotion programs (3rd ed.). Sydney: McGraw Hill.*



Evaluation findings

3.1. Effectiveness and efficiency

1

3.1.1. Finding 1

The shEqual initiative has demonstrated implementation effectiveness and efficiency by delivering extensive outputs across its strategy focus areas

The shEqual initiative has demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in its implementation by successfully delivering on a broad range of activities and outputs across its strategy areas as intended⁶, and in alignment with key state and federal government priorities. Resourcing constraints, however, necessitated adaptations to the project approach, including prioritisation of

activities to address pillar one of Seeing is Believing - engaging with industry. There was therefore a reduced focus on activities to address community empowerment and policy and regulatory changes. These adaptations have had implications for the initiative's progress on objective three, as discussed in Section 3.1.4. Finding 4 (pp.14-23).

Building and promoting the shEqual brand

The shEqual initiative has generated momentum and support by successfully building and promoting its brand. This has been achieved through mutually reinforcing activities implemented across the initiative's strategy focus areas such as developing and disseminating the research and evidence (Table 2), facilitating engagement and partnerships (Table 3-5), developing practical resources and tools (Table 6), implementing communications and campaigns activities (Table 7), and undertaking policy advocacy (p.12). The outputs delivered across these strategies are explored in further detail in the relevant sections below.

When the shEqual initiative officially launched in 2020, it established new branded digital assets, including a website and Instagram and LinkedIn accounts. As of 30 April 2024, the shEqual website has had 103,851 unique users and 171,481 page views, the Instagram account has 1,176 followers with a total reach of 113,690 through its content, and the LinkedIn account has a total of 659 followers. Videos on shEqual's Vimeo account have also had a total of 5,265 views and 36,701 impressions, demonstrating the initiative's strong reach and public interest in its content.

Reflecting the shEqual initiative's success in building its brand, findings from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 showed that a total of 79.4 per cent respondents believe there is awareness of the initiative in the industry. Forty-six per cent indicated they believe people are 'slightly aware' of shEqual, 23.9 per cent that people are 'moderately aware', and 9.5 per cent

⁶ Given the challenges associated with varying monitoring and reporting requirements outlined in Section 3.4 Challenges and Limitations (pp.29-34), the assessment for the shEqual initiative's effectiveness and efficiency in implementing activities and outputs as intended is based on the activities identified in the evaluation plan and Theory of Change.

that people are 'very aware' (Figure 2)⁷. Only 11.1 per cent indicated that they believe people are 'not at all' aware of the initiative, and just 9.5 per cent were unsure (Figure 2).

The shEqual initiative has also secured extensive media coverage both in industry and mainstream publications, thus also demonstrating the broader interest in the role of advertising, marketing and communications to influence culture change. Outlets that have featured coverage of the shEqual initiative are The Conversation, The Herald Sun, Yahoo, MediaWeek, Mumbrella, B&T, ABC Radio, 3CR Radio, Triple M, Channel 9 Chat Room, SBS the Feed, Broad Radio, Trinity P3, RPP Radio, AD News, and Campaign. Available data indicates the shEqual initiative has had extensive reach via such coverage. The shEqual video feature on SBS the Feed had over 500,000 views, and the Broad Radio interview amassed 76,000 views on Facebook.

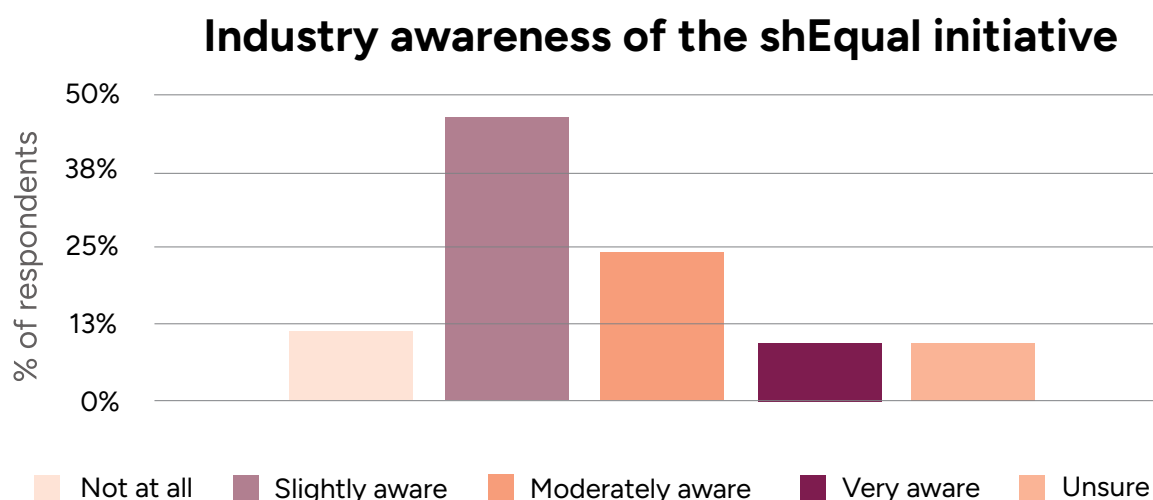


Figure 2: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - industry awareness

Research and evidence

The shEqual initiative has successfully produced all research products as intended. This has been done independently, through commissioned projects or formal partnerships, and with industry professionals. Seven research reports have subsequently been published, which have accumulated a total of 2,404 downloads between 23 November 2020 and 30 April 2024 (Table 2). The research and evidence emerged as one of the initiative key strengths in interviews, as discussed in Section 3.3. Strengths and Benefits (pp. 28-29), and shEqual is the only evidence-based initiative of its kind in Australia.

Table 2: Research and evidence outputs and reach

Publication

Downloads

⁷ Data for Figure 2 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions, with 34 respondents skipping the question.

Publication	Downloads
Advertising (In)Equality: The impacts of sexist advertising on women's health and wellbeing	1192
Community responses to gender portrayals in advertising: A research paper	80
Addressing and preventing sexist advertising: A snapshot of promising practice	92
The shEqual Survey Snapshot Report: Perceptions of gender equality in Australian advertising	390
Behind the Ads: Advertising Professionals' Perspectives on Gender Equality in the Workplace	234
Representing real people in ads: how to develop progressive, genuine and authentic advertising with a strong commercial impact	205
Representing real people quick guide	211

Strategic Action Framework – Seeing is Believing

Developing and publishing Seeing is Believing was a major achievement for the shEqual initiative, the legacy of which will ensure shEqual continues to influence change across the industry over the medium and long-term. Seeing is Believing provides an evidence-based strategic action framework to promote gender equality in advertising settings. It outlines three key pillars for change: i) industry culture change, ii) empowering community; and iii) policy and regulation and has been used to guide the implementation of the shEqual initiative more broadly. Since its release, it has been downloaded nearly 700 times, with website analytics indicating that there is continued interest in this resource.

While the initial intention was for the shEqual initiative to implement activities across all three pillars of the framework, an early review of project processes combined with resourcing constraints led the project team to revise the scope of work to focus predominantly on pillar one. This consolidated focus demonstrates a commitment to continuous quality improvement and enabled the project team to undertake deeper engagement with industry professionals to build support from and leadership within the industry for the initiative and ensure it was informed by the necessary expertise. As one stakeholder reflected:

“Obviously it’s such a great initiative to have, but you kind of need that expert knowledge of our industry if you want to try and change it and have effect.” – PP#3

The shEqual project team also felt that focusing on pillar one was crucial to create a strong foundation to successfully progress work across pillars two and three:

“I think there is a risk that moving into the consumer focus work too early, we’re seen to be rallying consumer support against the industry. So, I think the industry has to be prepped and primed before that process happens.” – PS#4

Further, stakeholders reflected that working with community is challenging, and requires intensive resourcing and effort to establish partnerships, build trust, and activate wider community mobilisation. These findings suggest the decision to focus on pillar one was justified, and that greater investment is needed to work and influence change across all three framework pillars.

Facilitating partnerships and engagement, training, and industry capacity building

Overall, the shEqual initiative has delivered its intended activities and outputs relating to partnerships and engagement with industry professionals. This has included the direct engagement of more than 2,000 advertising professionals and other stakeholders through its project governance, research and capacity building activities, and significant digital engagement of 238,844 stakeholders through its social media accounts, communications and campaigns, over the life of the initiative. Some notable activities reflecting shEqual’s success in this area include: the co-design and delivery of leadership forums (Table 3) and practical tools and resources to support industry to promote gender equality (Table 4), the development and piloting of gender equality training packages, face to face events and activities to promote shEqual and build industry capacity for gender equality (Table 5), and social media campaigns (Table 7) and digital assets (as discussed in Building and promoting the shEqual brand, p.6).

The shEqual initiative successfully implemented three project governance and implementation mechanisms that have actively involved 14 industry professionals over the life of the project (Table 3). These groups have enabled industry professionals to inform project activities and outputs that are relevant, appropriate and fit-for-purpose for advertising settings.

Partnership	Timeline	# meetings	# participants	# industry professionals
Project Reference Group	2020 - 21	2	12-15 per meeting	5-7 per meeting
	2021-22	3		
	2022-23	3		
	2023-24	3		
Senior Leader Event Working Group	80	1	5	3
Create Campaign Working Group	92	2	7	4

Table 3: Governance mechanisms with industry engagement

The shEqual initiative also successfully engaged 722 industry professionals through its research and consultation activities (Table 4). These consultations were critical to establishing an evidence-base for the project, setting priorities for action, and informing the development of research papers, resources, tools, and training modules that were tailored to industry needs.

Publication	Downloads	# participants
shEqual Survey 2021	2021	600
Consultation to develop GE In Advertising Guidelines for Local Government	2022	33
Industry consultations to identify actions in progress and engagement opportunities	2022	25
shEqual message testing survey	2022	64
shEqual Impact Survey 2023	2023-24	97

Table 4: Research and consultation outputs

In addition, a total of 18 events, guest presentations and trainings (Table 5) were successfully delivered to at least 964 industry professionals to build capacity to promote gender equality and the shEqual brand. This includes engagement with more than 60 industry professionals to co-design and develop training content, and 42 professionals to pilot-test the training via a series of two-day workshops in 2020-2021 (Table 5).

The shEqual initiative has also used its digital assets and implemented successful communications and campaigns to drive significant industry engagement with the program, its content and resources. Notably, this has resulted in the successful digital engagement of 238,844 industry and other stakeholders such as through followers, content interactions, and click-throughs, and digital reach of nearly 1,000,000. This is demonstrative of the significant interest in the shEqual initiative's content and resources.

The initiative did not, however, reach at least 500 advertising professionals through the tailored online training package as intended. As of 30 April 2024, 25 participants have completed the Gender Equality in Advertising Content online training module and 14 having completed the Gender Equality in Ad Workplaces one. A further 38 and 23 people have registered for these modules respectively and are yet to complete the courses. This indicates a need to drive uptake of resources and tools developed through the shEqual initiative, as discussed in Section 3.4. Challenge and Limitations (pp.29-30) and is reflective of broader sector challenges with the uptake of paid training post COVID-19.

Though the target for the paid online training modules has not yet been realised, the shEqual initiative has recently received significant interest and demand for online training to promote gender equality for communications and marketing professionals. Training will be delivered in June to meet this need. The initiative also has a partnership with the Aunties, an industry-led initiative, to develop a training program for responding to disclosures. While these trainings all fall outside of the reporting period for this evaluation, it is indicative of the broader interest in the shEqual initiative, its success to date in building momentum for gender equality in advertising settings, and its ability to remain responsive and adaptive to the needs of marketing, advertising and communications stakeholders.



Table 5: shEqual events and capacity building activities

Event	Timeline	shEqual's role	# participants
shEqual campaign launch	2020	Organiser	>200 108 took shEqual pledge
GE in Ad Content – Training Module Pilot Workshop 1	2020	Organiser	11
Bold and Strong: Presenting the shEqual Survey results	2021	Organiser	N/A
Presentation to University Technology Sydney	2021	Guest	60
Presentation Our Watch	2021	Guest	50
Presentation at Never Not Creative International Women's Day Event	2021	Guest	N/A
GE in Ad Content – Training Module Pilot Workshop 2	2021	Organiser	14
GE in Ad Workplaces – Training Module Pilot	2021	Organiser	17
Guidelines for Local Government online launch	2022	Organiser	38
Mavens Magazine Volume 1 launch	2022	Sponser	300
Mavens Magazine Volume 2 launch	2023		
SH!FT Female Stereotypes Panel Event	2022	Organiser	25
Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West	2022	Partner	38
Leading Change: From Culture to Content Leadership Event	2023	Organiser	47
Charting a collective future online event	2023	Organiser	16

Event	Timeline	shEqual's role	# participants
shEqual 3rd Birthday	2023	Organiser	14
Australian Retailers Association Gender Equality and Inclusion Symposium	2023	Guest	32
65th National Convention of the National Council to Promote Ethics of Mass Media in Japan	2023	Guest	>70
Never Not Creative Allies Program session	2023	Guest	6
ThinkHQ Lunch and Learn	2024	Guest	52
City of Kingston Lunch and Learn	2024	Guest	16
Promoting Gender Equality in Communications, Marketing and Advertising Campaign Regional Workshop with Women's Health Goulburn North East	2024	Partner organiser	11
Promoting Gender Equality in Communications, Marketing and Advertising Campaign Regional Workshop with Women's Health in the South East	2024	Partner organiser	25
Beyond the Tick Box Panel Event	2024	Organiser	47
Responding to the new normal: SASVic's Symposium on technology-facilitated sexual violence	2024	Guest	109
Online training course – GE in Ads training module	2024	Organiser	25
Online training course – GE in Workplaces training module	2024	Organiser	14

Practice tools and resources

As intended, the shEqual initiative produced five practice tools and resources to support industry professionals to promote gender equality in advertising workplaces, content and communications, as well as to support the general community to report sexist ads. These have had a total of reach of 1,345 to date (Table 6).

Practice tool/resource	Reach
SH!FT Guide to identifying and challenging gender stereotypes in ads	627
Reporting a Sexist Ad Toolkit	82
Local Government Guide on Gender Equality in Advertising and Communications	293
Content Creation Checklist for Gender Equal Ads	110
Workplace Equality Pulse Check Tool	31 entries 289 views

Table 6: shEqual practice tools and resources

Communications and campaigns

As part of its communications and campaigns strategy, the shEqual initiative has successfully implemented two social media campaigns and a regular newsletter (Table 7) and has used its digital assets to drive industry engagement with the initiative and its resources as intended. Across its communications and campaigns activities, data analytics indicate that the shEqual initiative has had a significant reach of nearly 1,000,000, and successful digital engagement of 238,844 industry and other stakeholders, as discussed elsewhere. The only outstanding activity – the creative campaigns which aims to drive uptake of the shEqual initiative’s resources - is planned for delivery in May 2024, thus falling outside of this evaluation’s scope.

#snapsexism	Make It shEqual podcast	Round Up newsletter
51,335 views of campaign content	51,749 social accounts reached	725 subscribers
51,335 views of campaign content	14,000 click-throughs	26% average opens
11,973 shEqual page views	495,000 impressions	7.8% average link clicks
3,234 views of #snapsexism video	319 plays on Apple Podcasts	
	391 plays on Spotify	
	144 YouTube plays	

Table 7: Communications and campaigns outputs

In addition, findings from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 indicate that nearly all respondents (95.2%) had heard of the shEqual initiative before completing the survey, with social media being the top medium identified through which respondents had first heard of it (41.3%) (Figure 3)⁸. This reflects the initiative’s effectiveness and efficiency in using communications and campaigns to reach its intended audience.

How respondents first heard of shEqual

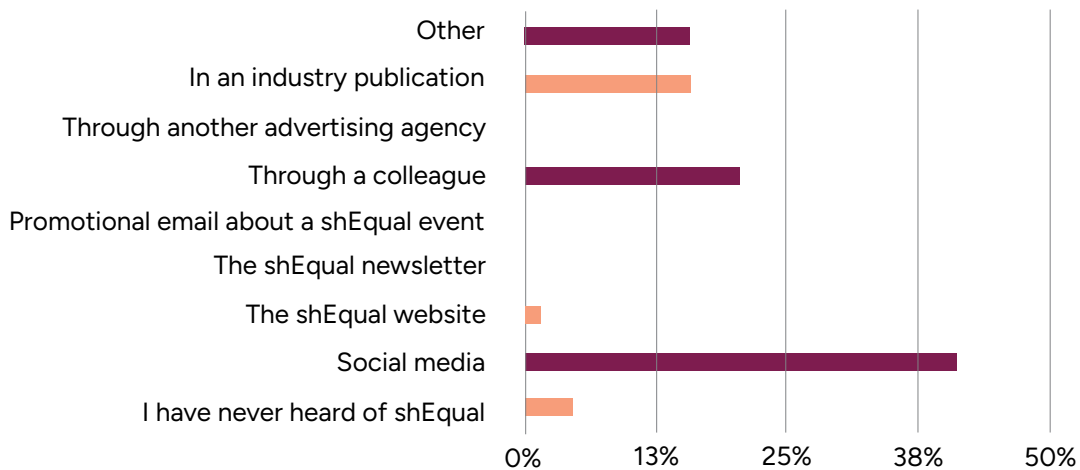


Figure 3: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - how respondents first heard of shEqual

Policy and advocacy

While the shEqual initiative has successfully produced some policy and advocacy outputs, this work was predominantly undertaken by the shEqual project team in the initial and later stages of the project, rather than concurrently to industry engagement throughout the project as originally intended.

At the time focus groups were conducted, work in the policy and regulation space was perceived as a challenge given it required a national level effort and, as a state-based organisation, WHV were likely to have a limited influence on change at this level. Project staff also reflected that policy and advocacy work was not used as an approach in the initial stages of the program as it may have posed a risk to their industry relationships if the industry felt they were being lobbied against by other stakeholders too early. As one participant noted:

“I sort of read the national framework and it said the three pillars that we work within, and I would say since coming in, it probably has, like PS3 said, just focused on the industry and I feel like because obviously where we’re having the most impact or if we talk about working within regulation that sort of then might alienate the relationships that we’ve built. So, I feel like we’ve been quite targeted with where we’re working.”
 – PS#2

⁸ Data for Figure 5 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions; 34 respondents skipped the question.

More recently, however, the shEqual initiative has increased its advocacy efforts reflecting the need to address systemic barriers to promoting gender equality through advertising and the strong relationships with industry that have been cultivated.

The following policy and advocacy activities were implemented under the shEqual initiative over the implementation period:

- Submission to a review of the Australian Association of National Advertisers' Code of Ethics, leading to the following changes to the legislation and regulations:
 - Adoption of a harm-based standard
 - Prohibition of 'overtly sexual' imagery
 - Improved guidance on gender stereotypes
- Developed an options paper on legislative and regulatory options to address sexist advertising
- Involvement in 17 meetings with Victorian and Commonwealth Members of Parliament and their advisers, including Ministers and Senators and Government bodies, one with the office of a federal commissioner and one with management consultants to advocate for regulatory reform and secure support for the shEqual initiative.

In recognition of recent advocacy efforts, the Victorian Government provided the shEqual initiative with additional investment to pursue regulatory reform work. While this is not enough to sustain the program beyond September 2024, it reflects the government's trust in shEqual to pursue this work. Its recent advocacy activities and related successes are also indicative that there is strong interest among key decision and policy makers in this work despite the challenges related to the initiative's scope of work and influence.



2

3.1.2. Finding 2

The shEqual initiative outputs, activities and achievements are aligned with and have contributed to key state and federal government priorities

The shEqual initiative has demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency through the alignment and contribution of its outputs, activities and achievements to state and federal government priorities to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. Most notably, the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy and Action

Plan 2023-2027 - Our Equal State (Our Equal State) identifies cultural change as one of its five key areas for action to promote gender equality and recognises the role the industry plays in shaping and socialising gender norms, and identifies the shEqual initiative's critical function in reducing sexism and the objectification of women and gender inequality in advertising in its action plan. In addition, the Australian Government's Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality (Working for Women) identifies preventing gender-based violence as one of four key priorities, and the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan) and First Action Plan 2023-2027 outlines their commitment to ending gender-based violence and identifies the critical role of primary prevention approaches to address the underlying attitudes and systems that drive it.

By establishing the evidence-base for gender equality in advertising settings, creating practical tools and resources to support industry professionals to promote gender equality in advertising workplaces and content, and engaging industry through partnerships and capacity building, the shEqual initiative has made a significant contribution to Our Equal State, Working for Women, the National Plan, and the National Plan's First Action Plan. Its extensive outputs (Section 3.1.1. Finding 1, pp. 6-12) combined with its contribution to changes in knowledge and understanding within the industry (Section 3.1.4. Finding 4, pp.15-18), successes in advocacy for policy and regulatory change (Section 3.2.1. Finding 1, pp.23-24) and contribution to the shift in discourse on gender equality in the advertising industry (Section 3.2.2. Finding 2, p.24) all evidence how the shEqual initiative's activities and impacts are helping to drive the attitudinal, knowledge and cultural change required to achieve gender equality and prevent gender-based violence as outlined in these government strategies. As a result of these activities it has also directly contributed to the following actions that are identified in the National Plan's First Action Plan 2023-2027:

Action 1:

Advance gender equality and address the drivers of all forms of gender-based violence, including through initiatives aimed to improve community attitudes and norms toward family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Action 2:

Improve the national evidence base by working towards consistent terminology and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and by strengthening collection and sharing of data and evidence.

Action 3:

Improve action to prevent and address sexual violence and harassment in all settings, across the four domains of the National Plan.

3

3.1.3. Finding 3

The shEqual initiative has demonstrated efficient use of its financial resources

The shEqual initiative was funded predominantly by the Victorian Government, through grants provided by the Office of Women (OFW) and Respect Victoria. Funding was initially provided by the OFW through the Department of Premier and Cabinet in 2020-2021, and subsequently through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing from 2022-

2024. In addition, Respect Victoria provided funding from 2021-2023⁹.

Total income over the life of the project was \$1,644,615, which included \$1,489,571 from the Office for Women, \$150,000 from Respect Victoria and \$5,044 from other sources. Total expenditure over the funded period was 1,677,447, representing an overspend of \$65,664, which equates to a variance of less than 2 per cent overall. These additional costs were absorbed internally by WHV, drawing on their base-funding for prevention related work.

The shEqual initiative has demonstrated financial efficiency in two key ways. Firstly, the funding was utilised as intended and as set out in the relevant funding agreements. The majority of funding was allocated to employee expenses (59%), followed by program and project expenses (28%), with a relatively small proportion (13%) allocated to business operating costs (which included the use of equipment and information technology). Secondly, the initiative successfully implemented all planned activities and produced the intended deliverables within the funding, as set out in each funding agreement. While some activities did not achieve the intended reach or participation targets, this did not significantly impact the overall financial efficiency of the initiative.

As the only initiative of its kind in Australia, shEqual has played (and will continue to play) a critical role in driving culture change across the advertising industry, including by developing the evidence-base on sexism in advertising, raising awareness and understanding of the issues, and building a movement for social change in collaboration with the advertising industry.

4

3.1.4. Finding 4

As the only initiative of its kind in Australia, the shEqual initiative has demonstrated value for money

Its unique strategic approach and scope, contribution to Victorian Government policy priorities and outcomes, demonstrated ability to build trusting relationships with advertising

⁹ Respect Victoria provided an additional \$48,000 in March 2024 to progress shEqual's regulatory reform priorities. However, assessment of the utilisation of this funding is outside the scope of this evaluation, as it will be carried forward to the 2024-2025 financial year.

organisations and professionals, and its extensive reach and engagement of advertising, government and other relevant stakeholders also suggest the initiative has provided (and is in a strong position to continue to provide) a positive return on investment.

In addition, the initiative created several employment opportunities within Women's Health Victoria, and engaged a highly skilled team of staff with expertise in gender equality, prevention of violence against women and primary prevention more broadly. Over the implementation period, the initiative employed 1.6-2.8 FTE people on the project, totalling approximately 17,056 hours of staff time. This enabled efficient and cost-effective design, planning and implementation of the project, including its several research and practice outputs.

Based on overall expenditure on the initiative, the estimated cost for directly engaging each advertising professional or stakeholder in a capacity building or change activity (including training, leadership events, forums, campaigns and research) was approximately \$839 per person. In terms of the initiative's broader reach, the estimated cost of engaging advertising professionals in campaign content, messages and/or resources was approximately \$7 per person.

Several digital brand assets, including the shEqual website, Instagram page and LinkedIn page were developed as part of this initiative. The shEqual website has had over 103,000 unique users, and the shEqual social media accounts have more than 1,800 followers. While the monetary value of these brand assets is unknown, WHV is able to maintain these at a relatively low cost. As such, the ongoing maintenance of the shEqual website as a resource hub and the continued presence of the shEqual brand provides ongoing value for money, as they ensure the resources and broader benefits of the project are sustained beyond the funding period.

5

3.1.5. Finding 5

The shEqual initiative has achieved objective one and is making progress towards its other objectives and intended outcomes

The shEqual initiative has produced research and evidence to guide action to promote gender equality in the advertising industry, thus achieving its first objective. Meanwhile, work continues to achieve objective two: increase awareness and understanding

among advertising professionals of the impact of sexist attitudes on gender equality; objective three: to engage with industry and community to mobilise and support action; and objective four: to build capacity of advertising workplaces to provide safe, respectful, and inclusive environments. While the initiative is yet to achieve objectives two, three and four and its intended outcomes in full, the shEqual initiative's successes in building the evidence-base and strong relationships with industry professionals have created momentum and a strong foundation for future work that will support their full realisation.

3.1.6. Objective one: establish a sound evidence-base for primary prevention in the advertising setting

The shEqual initiative has successfully achieved objective one, as demonstrated through the development and publication of several research reports (Table 2) to guide action to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women in advertising settings. These publications have drawn on existing literature and engaged over 700 industry professionals and consumers to contribute new evidence to the field. Research topics have covered gender inequality in advertising and its impact on women's health and wellbeing, the role of advertising in influencing culture, addressing and preventing sexist advertising and developing inclusive ads, and perceptions and experiences of gender (in)equality in advertising workplaces.

Stakeholders reported that the research and evidence-base established under the shEqual initiative was one of its most significant achievements. Participants reported that the rigour underpinning the research gave the initiative and its component strategies credibility and was being shared by those attending shEqual events. As one participant noted:

“The research and the rigor that shEqual has as being part of that, the Women’s Health Network and the rigor that goes behind any government research...that’s our strength” – PP#1

Project staff also noted that the research provides a strong foundation for the initiative and guided them in their work:

“I feel like that [research] really underpins everything that we do.” – PS#2

Furthermore, participants perceived that the research and evidence-base developed as part of the shEqual initiative provides an integral tool to guide action to promote and advocate for gender equality in the advertising industry. As one participant shared:

“I really like the framework as well, having that there because it kind of tells me, okay, what is it we’re trying to achieve with that?” – PP#2

The research publications were also instrumental in developing other tools and resources, such as the online training modules (Table 5) and the Make It shEqual podcast and communications campaigns (Table 6). Participants identified that having additional evidence-based and practical resources, such as the training, were crucial to supporting change in the industry:

“What shEqual has been able to do is to provide the research, the framework for action in this area and space. And I also think the training is a great way of providing work areas with the knowledge, with the insights to why it’s important to change and how you can go about change.” – PP#5

The development and successful dissemination of this research has subsequently contributed to the following outcomes:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of gender inequality and its negative impacts
- Increased understanding of the ways the advertising industry influences Australian culture
- The industry adopts shEqual terminology and concepts about stereotyping
- Increased understanding of what constitutes a negative and positive ad
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the harmful impacts of sexism and stereotypes used in ads

3.1.7. Objective two: increase understanding among stakeholders of the role/contribution of sexist advertising to gender inequality and violence against women

Findings from surveys and interviews suggest that the shEqual initiative has contributed to an increased awareness and understanding in the industry of the link between sexist advertising, gender inequality and violence against women. While results from the training surveys and the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 demonstrated that the initiative had a positive impact on awareness and understanding, these changes appear to have largely been limited to stakeholders who were directly involved in the initiative. The shEqual initiative has not yet reached a critical mass of people across the industry to have had industry-wide impacts. This sentiment was reflected in interviews with key stakeholders, suggesting a need to scale up communication and stakeholder engagement activities to a larger and more diverse audience.

Understanding of key issues (pilot and online training)

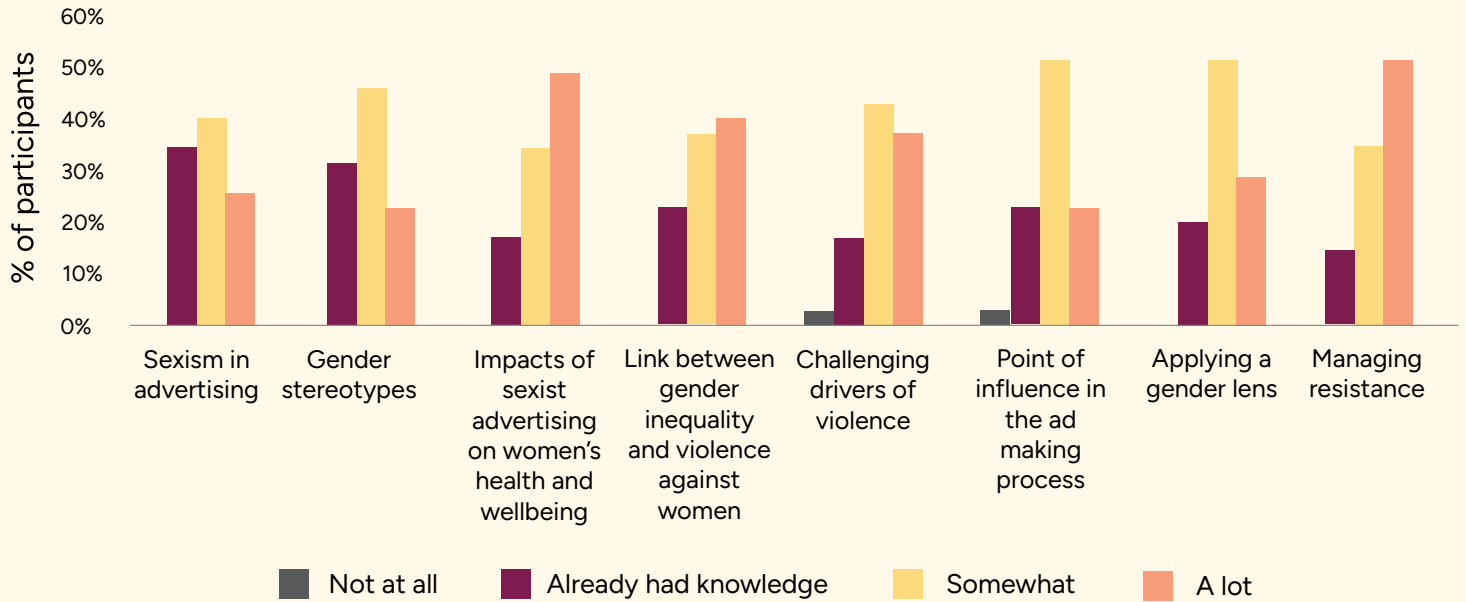


Figure 4: GE in Advertising training survey results – understanding of key issues

Results from the Gender Equality (GE) in Advertisements pilot and online training evaluation surveys (Figure 4) demonstrate that the training increased participants’ understanding of sexism in advertising (65.7%), gender stereotypes (68.6%), the impacts of sexist advertising on women’s health and wellbeing (82.9%), the link between gender inequality and violence against women (77.1%), challenging the drivers of violence (80%), their point of influence in the ad making process (74.3%), applying a gender lens (80%), and managing resistance (85.7%) (Figure 4). The training also increased participants confidence to identify gender stereotypes (100%)¹⁰ and sexism in advertising (100%)¹¹ and how to use gender equitable approaches in their work (100%)¹²(Figure 5).

10 The percentage reported for this indicator is reported as a per cent of the 33 respondents who completed this question. Two respondents skipped this question.

11 The percentage reported for this indicator is reported as a per cent of the 34 respondents who completed this question. One respondent skipped this question.

12 The percentage reported for this indicator is reported as a per cent of the 20 respondents who have completed the online training evaluation. This question was asked in a different format for the pilot training and thus has been excluded here for analysis.

Increased confidence to identify and address sexism in advertising

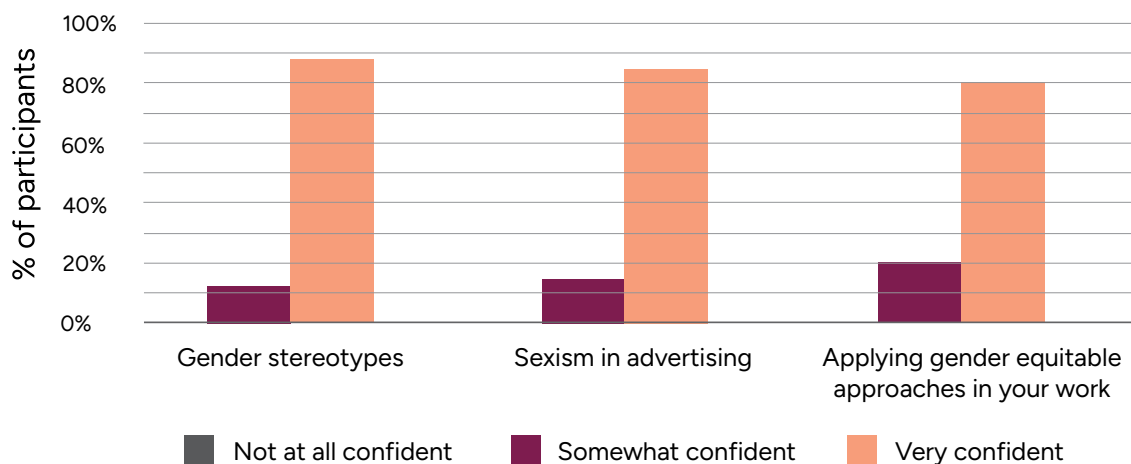


Figure 5: GE in Advertising results - increased confidence

Furthermore, findings from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 indicate that stakeholders perceived that the shEqual initiative has resulted in positive changes in knowledge, awareness and understanding. Most respondents to the survey agreed that the initiative has improved knowledge within the industry about gender equality (64.9%) and the harmful impacts of sexism and stereotypes in ads (68.4%) (Figure 6)¹³.

Percieved impact of shEqual on knowledge

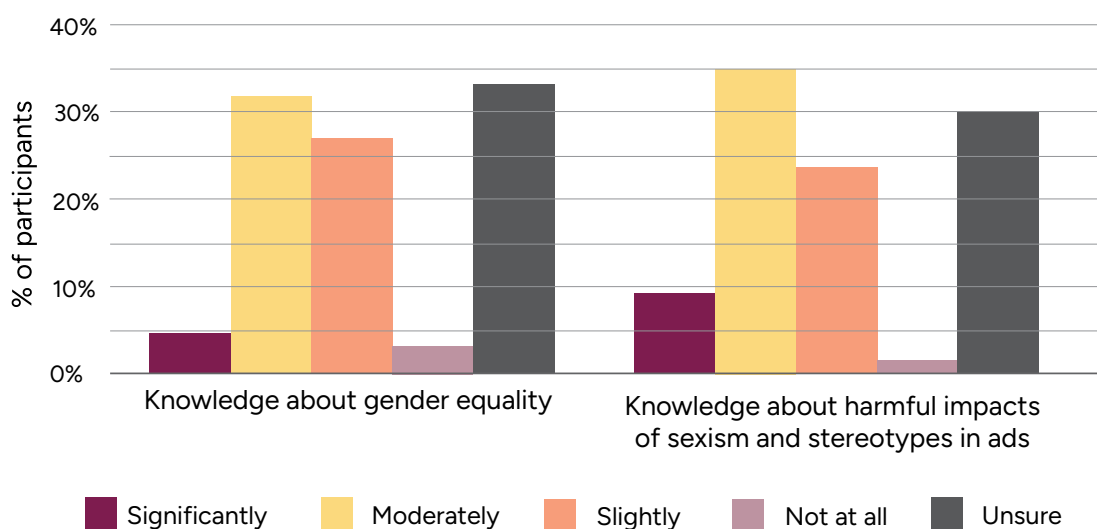


Figure 6: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - perceived impact on knowledge

¹³ Data for indicators in Figure 6 are reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions, with 34 respondents skipping these two questions.

Key themes emerging from interviews similarly suggest that the initiative has had a positive impact on knowledge and understanding of the industry professionals who have been exposed to the initiative. Project staff reported that they had seen evidence of increased awareness and understanding within the industry, and that they were achieving this objective:

“Through our work and even through some of the research we’ve done, we’ve identified that people understand the problem now and that it has to be more practical and we have to provide this sort of solutions-focused approach.” – PS#4

This was further illustrated by industry stakeholders who acknowledged the role of shEqual in articulating the link between sexist advertising, gender inequality and violence against women. Stakeholders perceived this to be a clear message that they had not previously been exposed to, indicating the critical role of the initiative in raising awareness, knowledge and understanding of these issues. As one participant noted:

“They kicked off initially with research that linked domestic violence or violence against women to advertising communications. That was quite ground-breaking. I’d never heard that before.” – PP#4

Participants felt, however, that this change had occurred predominantly among those involved with the initiative, that industry-wide change had been limited, and ultimately more work was needed to extend the reach and impact of the initiative, its resources and activities:

“The distribution and uptake of the training is an area that still needs to be worked on, but certainly there is a lot of content there and available for people to access.” – PP#5

Overall, the findings indicate that many of the initiative’s key activities and outputs present a feasible approach to improving knowledge and understanding and have been able to increase understanding of the role of sexist advertising in contributing to gender inequality and violence against women among those who have participated. However, as reported for other key objectives, evaluation findings suggest that the change has largely occurred among those engaged directly in the training and that there is a need to increase its uptake, together with other project resources designed to increase knowledge.

By implementing activities and outputs to improve knowledge and understanding, the shEqual initiative has made progress on the following outcomes:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of gender inequality and its negative impacts
- Increased understanding of the ways the advertising industry influences Australian culture
- Increased understanding of what constitutes a negative and positive ad
- Improved attitudes towards gender equality in the advertising industry

3.1.8. Objective three: mobilise and support industry and community engagement in action to promote gender equality in advertising and prevent violence against women

Evaluation findings suggest that the shEqual initiative has partially achieved its objective to mobilise and support industry and community to take action to promote gender equality in advertising. The shEqual initiative has successfully engaged professionals employed by more progressive agencies and/or involved in ‘industry movements’ who already play an active role in promoting gender equality. This has involved facilitating partnerships to implement the initiative, brokering relationships between industry-led initiatives for collaborative action, and providing support by developing practical tools and resources and delivering capacity building activities to industry professionals to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence to take action on gender equality. Engagement from some of the largest agencies, however, has been lacking. In addition, and as discussed in Section 3.1.1. Finding 1, due to resourcing constraints the scope of the project was reduced to focus on industry engagement and thus direct community engagement to date has been limited.

Participation in shEqual activities



Figure 7: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - participation in activities

While the initiative’s extensive research and evidence activities and outputs (Table 2) and reach of its capacity building events and activities (Table 5) provide evidence of its capacity to mobilise and support industry professional, findings from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 show nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of respondents had never attended or participated in any shEqual events or activities (Figure 7)¹⁴. This suggests that despite the initiative’s success in raising awareness of the initiative (Figure 2) and engaging existing

¹⁴ Data for Figure 7 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions, with 34 respondents skipping the question.

supporters of gender equality through formal partnerships, resource development and event participation (Tables 3-5) that more work is required to ensure active engagement with industry professionals beyond existing supporters.

Interview findings reflect these results, with stakeholders indicating that there is a core group of industry professionals who are aware of, dedicated to and actively involve with the shEqual initiative, but that more work is required for the initiative to grow in reach and scale. Importantly, stakeholders perceived that the shEqual initiative filled a leadership role in the industry to mobilise support for gender equality that was otherwise lacking:

“We say we want to lead the industry to a more gender equitable future cause we feel like that leadership isn’t there, and even though we’re tiny we have noticed that when we do things or when we critique things or interrogate them, others tend to follow.” – PP#4

Participants acknowledged the strong relationships that had been built through the shEqual initiative, and shEqual’s key role in brokering relationships between and supporting grassroots, industry-led gender equity initiatives. This has included sponsoring the launch of Mavens I and II, an industry publication which champions gender equality in communications, collaborating with the Aunties to develop a training program on identifying and responding to disclosures of sexual harassment and assault, and delivering capacity building sessions on gender equality in advertising content and workplaces as part of ‘Never Not Creative’s’ gender equality allyship program. Participants reflected that through these activities, as well as the capacity building opportunities that it offers, the shEqual initiative has helped mobilise and support industry, and provides the potential for further coordinated, impactful action. As one participant noted:

“One thing that I’ve observed that seems really good is having shEqual as a kind of in the middle person that brings together some of the different initiatives that are happening and they’re like, we’re aware of all these things that are happening and maybe how can we play that role of bringing it together or helping support all those other initiatives?” – PP#2

While these findings illustrate there has been strong progress in efforts to mobilise the industry, interview participants perceived that engagement with the shEqual initiative has predominantly been with people from progressive agencies and existing advocates for gender equality.

“A lot of people who are aware of us are also supporters. I’m unsure about how much reach we get across small agencies that are not female-owned and led. That would probably be where I would see the biggest gap, and also I think the largest agencies would be.” – PS#3

Beyond this, interview participants assessed that awareness of the initiative was quite low, supporting results from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 (Figure 2). Engagement with larger agencies and leaders, men, and people who are either unsure, or not supportive of, gender equality, were identified as key gaps which limited the initiative’s capacity to grow and influence change. As one participant noted:

“We’re preaching to the choir...We’re not capturing people that are fence sitters or could use motivation.” – PP#1

While broader engagement had been a challenge, participants felt that the initiative had effectively built momentum for change and that continued work was crucial to sustain it:

“It would be a pity to stop doing something now, one, because the job’s not done, but secondly, there has been enough, the initial part of getting momentum started is the hard bit, and to stop now would just be writing off the momentum that’s already there.” – PP#7

Participants identified opportunities to enhance and expand engagement through the existing structure, such as by providing information or concepts ahead of reference group meetings that could be workshopped, or creating a hybrid role that is situated within both women’s health and an industry agency. As one participant reflected:

“One piece that sometimes feels like it’s missing is almost like a hybrid role around someone who works at Women’s Health Victoria, but also works in the advertising industry and sits between them or across them and kind of is in both worlds because the reference group is a point in time and there’s like, we’re going to meet four times a year...but what if that role exists for continuously that kind of lives in both worlds?” – PP#2

To accelerate wider engagement with the industry and motivate more professionals and agencies to take action on gender equality, participants discussed the potential of new engagement strategies, such as sponsoring an award to recognise good practice, or developing report cards to call out those who are not. As one participant suggested:

“It’s an industry that’s very much driven by awards and acknowledgement and recognition... we thought there was an opportunity there to start recognising women in media that were acting as mentors and providing leadership, but also partnering with any number of the award shows to actually reward and acknowledge advertising that actually showed positive portrayal of women and avoided stereotyping as a way of just acknowledging that as well.” – PP#7

Participants also felt industry relationships could be expanded by engaging with clients and larger agencies, which were both considered critical to gaining influence within the industry more broadly. As one participant stated:

“I do think that if we want to have culture change, getting those big agencies to do the right thing, others will follow. And so, it’s kind of like this sector feels very much like it’s a commercial sector, it’s competitive.” – PS#4

While there has been strong progress on mobilising industry, progress to support community was more limited due to the strategic decision to dedicate shEqual resources to industry-focused work (Section 3.1.1. Finding 1). That said, the Reporting a Sexist Ad toolkit and the #snapsexism social media campaign were both developed to support community members to identify, report and call out sexist advertisements. The campaign achieved extensive reach, resulting in a total of 51,335 views of campaign content, 6,095 visits to the shEqual website, 11,973 shEqual page views, and 3,234 views of the #snapsexism video. This suggests an interest and appetite by the community for information, resources and engagement opportunities to address sexism in advertising.

The shEqual initiative's progress to mobilise and support industry and community to take action to promote gender equality in advertising has contributed to the following outcomes:

- Increased understanding of the ways the advertising industry influences Australian culture
- Increased engagement in gender equality events, training and activities
- Increased understanding of what constitutes a positive and negative ad
- Increased engagement with shEqual as a resource to support the industry
- Strengthened connections between shEqual and grassroots movements within the industry

Overall, the initiative has made substantial progress on this objective in relation to industry engagement, with participants identifying opportunities to expand and build on engagement to date and capitalise on the existing momentum. The initiative has successfully supported existing champions to take action to promote gender equality and to build momentum for a movement for change, and thus provides a strong foundation from which to scale-up the shEqual initiative.

3.1.9. Objective four: build the capacity of ad agencies to promote gender equality and provide safe and respectful workplaces

Evaluation findings indicate that while this objective has not been achieved, progress is underway to support ad agencies to improve the workplace systems and processes needed to fully realise it. Key resources have been developed to support this work, such as training packages, workplace gender equity audit tools, and research reports. However, as described elsewhere, the uptake and use of these resources to date has largely been by existing supporters of the initiative.

Results from the Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces online training evaluation survey (Figure 8) showed that it significantly increased understanding of gender equality in the advertising industry, the barriers to gender equality, and tools and strategies to achieve gender equality in the workplace. This knowledge is a key enabler of the capacity of advertising agencies to provide safe and respectful workplaces and suggests that this training is a feasible approach to building the capacity of ad agencies to promote gender equality in the workplace. Indeed, respondents identified a range of workplace actions they would take after completing the training including internal advocacy, policy reviews, and using the shEqual initiative’s tools and resources.

Understanding of issue before and after training



Figure 8: Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces training results – pre and post understanding

Extent to which shEqual had influence increased commitment to gender equality in ad workplaces

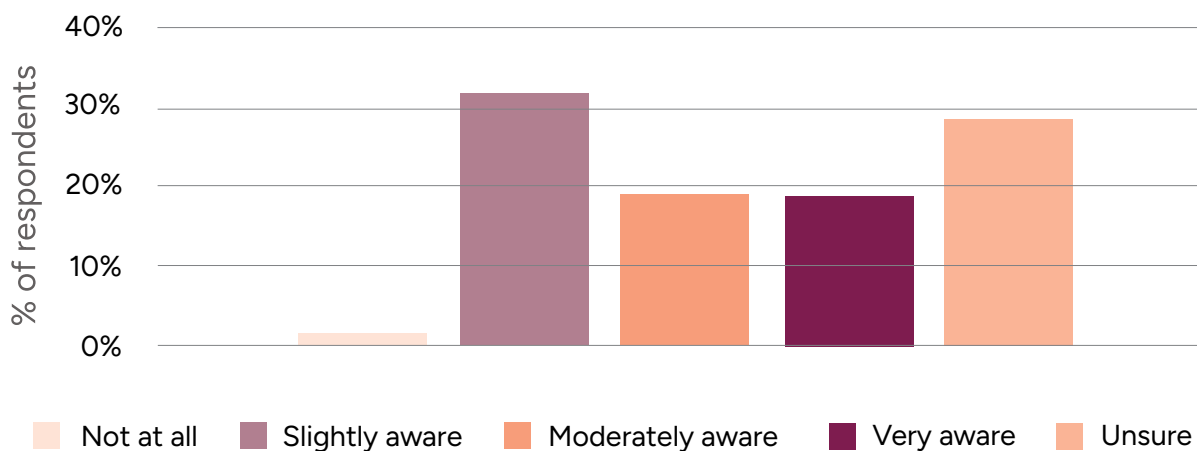


Figure 9: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - commitment to gender equality in ad workplaces

Results from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 also show that nearly all respondents (98.4%) believed that the shEqual initiative has influenced an increased commitment to creating gender equal workplaces in the industry to some degree (Figure 9)¹⁵.

While these are positive indications of the initiative’s capacity to achieve objective four, evidence suggests the broader uptake and use of the initiative’s resources and tools, and of change across the industry more broadly, is limited. Uptake and implementation appeared to be more common in workplaces where reference group members are also leaders or champions of shEqual and gender equity, and in workplaces that have a strong ethos and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. As one participant reflected:

“It’s very organisational. Who’s in charge? What agendas are they trying to push? That kind of thing. My workplace is quite progressive, so it makes sense that it’s happening there, but I’ve worked at other media agencies and I don’t know if it would fit in”. – PP#1

Similarly, it was noted speaking about the industry as a collective presented a challenge for the initiative to achieve its objectives given the diverse nature of workplaces within it and their subcultures:

“When it speaks to industry, it’s speaking to the industry more as a collective, which is a problem in itself versus what’s going on in each of the workplaces within the industry.” – PS#4

¹⁵ Data for Figure 9 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions, with 34 respondents skipping the question.

Importantly, however, the shEqual project team's skills and expertise in relation to promoting gender equality, training, professional development and capacity building emerged as a key theme in interviews that had supported progress on this objective (Section 3.3. Strengths and Benefits, p.28). Participants highlighted that it was a lack of engagement with the initiative by industry members and senior leaders that had inhibited action and change in advertising workplaces, which was partially driven by underlying resistance and backlash to gender equality. As one participant emphasised:

“I think the biggest thing is that engagement piece of industry. I don't think there's fault with the work and the work that we're doing. I think it's the fact that the industry is very reticent to join in and be regulated in any way at all.” – PP#6

These issues are further explored in Section 3.4. Challenges and Limitations.

Ultimately, while progress on objective four has been limited, the shEqual initiative provides a feasible approach to impacting this kind of change in advertising workplaces and requires longer-term action.

Due to the limited progress on objective four, progress on the following outcomes is likely to have been slower than desired:

- Increased engagement with shEqual as a resource to support the industry
- Improved attitudes towards gender equality in the advertising industry
- More organisations have GE policies and procedures in place

3.2. Impact

1

3.2.1. Finding 1

shEqual's advocacy led to the ACA and AANA adopting important regulatory changes

Evaluation findings suggest that through its advocacy strategies, the shEqual initiative effectively influenced changes to advertising industry policy and regulations. shEqual's leadership and advocacy to promote gender equality in

advertising was perceived as a key contributor to the systems-level changes implemented by both the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA), the self-regulatory body for the industry, and the Advertising Council of Australia (ACA), the peak-body for Australia's leading advertising agencies.

One of the shEqual initiative's key advocacy strategies was contributing a submission to the AANA's review into the advertising Code of Ethics, which aims to ensure that advertisements and marketing communications 'are legal, honest, truthful and have been prepared with respect for human dignity, an obligation to avoid harm to the consumer and society'¹⁶. As a result of this submission, the AANA changed the Code to adopt harm-based standards, prohibited and provided guidance on 'overtly sexual' imagery, and improved guidance on gender stereotypes.

Evaluation participants identified this as a significant success for the initiative, given the role of the Code of Ethics in setting standards for advertising and marketing communications against which community complaints are assessed. As one participant highlighted:

"They had a good win with the AANA... with getting them to embrace those and build in those guidelines, because they're also responsible for the management of the Advertising Standards Board, which is where community complaints are adjudicated on." – PP#7

In addition, participants held the view that disseminating the findings of the shEqual National Survey 2021 placed pressure on the ACA to develop and implement their own survey to examine the extent and severity of gender inequality and discrimination across the sector:

"shEqual's survey put pressure on the ad council to do their own survey, which ended up being the create space census... the fact that it had never happened and then it happened following shEqual's study, I think was proof that their work is pressuring the ad council to do better." – PP#4

¹⁶ Australian Association of National Advertisers, 2021, Code of Ethics <<https://aana.com.au/self-regulation/codes-guidelines/code-of-ethics/>>.

This success is indicative of shEqual’s leadership capability to successfully advocate for and drive the policy change and systems change required for gender equality. Indeed, participants felt strongly that the shEqual initiative could have continued impact on policy and regulation by continuing to work alongside industry bodies to improve it, leveraging existing policy to hold industry accountable, and improving consumer complaints processes. As one participant noted:

“I think there needs to be a lot more work done to really hold agencies and industry to account. And maybe it’s through that maybe’s also introducing not so much legislation, but I think relying on the act to be a bit more forceful in how standards are applied to the advertising sector” – PP#5

Interview findings indicate that the shEqual initiative influenced a shift in the discourse on gender equality within the industry, and that the initial shEqual National Survey 2021 was a key driver of this change. The 2021 survey findings documented experiences of gender inequality and discrimination within the industry, with participants reporting that gender inequality was being discussed and prioritised by the industry in a way they had not previously seen:

2

3.2.2. Finding 2

shEqual has contributed to a shift in the discourse around gender equality in the industry

“I feel like a lot came out of that [survey] and it was really good to have it down on paper, things people had experienced for such a long time and just have it all sort of laid out like that. I’ve never seen that happen before. And for me that’s a change because I think from then on, the way I guess I’ve noticed people speak in this space is different. I feel like there has been an attitude change. There has been this feeling of things are changing and that we can talk about these things, whereas maybe seven years ago you just couldn’t or wouldn’t be listened to. So, in that way it’s small, but just being able to speak openly about those kinds of things in this way that’s really uplifting and moving forward for women has been incredible.”
– PP#3

In addition, project staff reported that they had noticed industry professionals beginning to use the terminology and concepts described in shEqual resources. As one participant stated:

“People are using the terminology in the SH!FT resource in Kantar used it in their research for us. So that was a really nice simple direct impact to see.” – PS#3

3

3.2.3. Finding 3

The impact of shEqual on workplace culture has been limited

Despite the shift in the discourse across the industry, and the influence of the shEqual initiative on systems change through the ACA and AANA, the impact of the shEqual initiative on workplace culture appears to have been limited. These issues are further explored in Section 3.1.4. Finding 4, pp.21-23. That said, results from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 indicated that respondents felt shEqual had led to increased commitment by agencies to creating gender equality advertising workplaces (Figure 9).

Interview participants perceived that the shEqual initiative had had some influence on workplace culture and practices, though felt that this was generally limited with change occurring at a small-scale. As one participant noted:

“I think we’ve got, from what I’ve seen, an effect in our small circles, I don’t really see our group as a reference group having an effect on large industry circles, if that makes sense.” – PP#3

Participants and survey respondents highlighted that structural inequality persists within their workplaces and across the industry more broadly, and that significant barriers persist to speaking up for change:

“I’ve never had a person of colour, not even woman of colour, manage me in any of the jobs I’ve had here in the last eight and a half years. So, it’s really hard.” – PP#3

Finally, some participants reflected that with the change in discourse around gender equality, some agencies have learned how to use the language of equality and therefore how to engage in conversations in seemingly positive ways but are failing to take action to address or change workplace cultures and practices. As one participant emphasised:

“Agencies particularly are wanting to attract talent that is usually well-informed, educated, and so on these issues are much more progressive. So the management are often putting on an acceptable face on many of these issues while actually doing the complete opposite from the business perspective.” – PP#7

4

3.2.4. Finding 4

shEqual's impact on gender equality in ads is unclear, with varying perceptions among stakeholders

While evaluation findings suggest that advertisements appear to be more gender inclusive, participants had contradictory views regarding the extent to which shEqual had affected these changes. In general, it is difficult to attribute changes to advertising content to a single campaign or project and would require a content analysis of a significant number of advertisements across various media¹⁷. Indeed, while some felt that shEqual had resulted in positive changes in advertising content, others felt that these changes reflected a broader social and cultural shift.

Results of the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 showed that most respondents perceived that the shEqual initiative had positively impacted content creation by leading to an increase in the use of authentic and diverse representations in advertising (58.73%), and a decrease in the use of sexist ads (58.73%) (Figure 10)¹⁸.

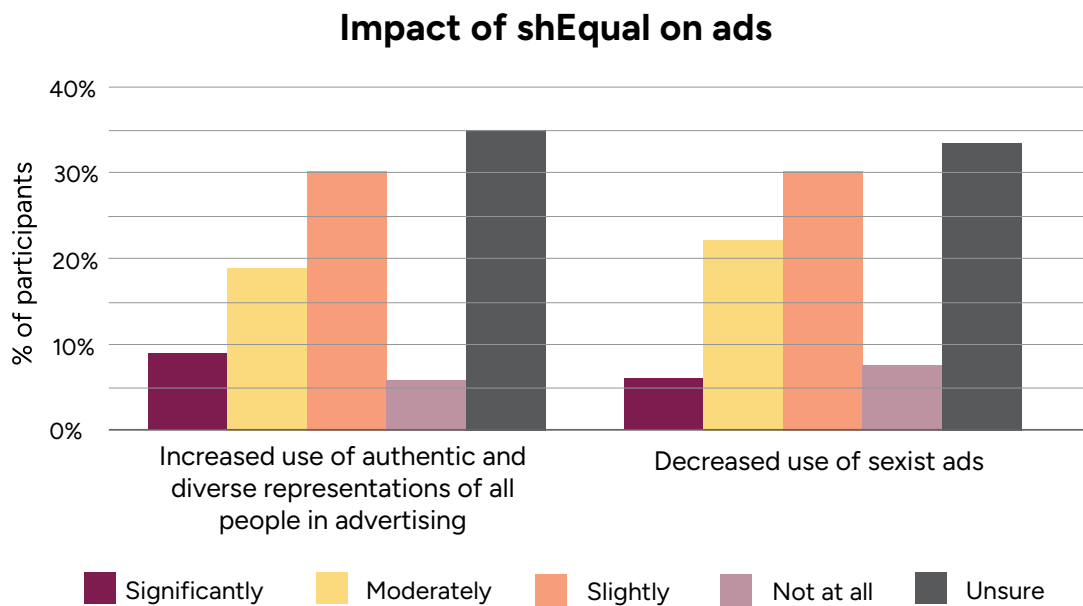


Figure 10: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - shEqual impact on content creation

17 Content analysis of advertising and media was outside the scope of this evaluation; however this work has been undertaken elsewhere including by the United Nations Unstereotype Alliance. See: UN Women (2024), State of the Industry 2023, New York: UN Women.

18 Data for Figure 10 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions, with 34 respondents skipping the question.

Conversely, stakeholders in interviews reflected that while there has been a positive shift in the overall content being created, attributing this solely to shEqual is difficult. They acknowledged that shEqual was part of this change as one component of the broader efforts to promote change in media settings and did have influence, but this was occurring in a cultural context that is driving change across society and within the industry. As one participant shared:

“We are one part of many moving things, and I would say yes, there are things that we have done, the research and the seven stereotypes work that I think people have seen and they recognise, and potentially it has made them think a little bit more critically about the ads or the audiences that they build.” – PP#1

Participants also noted that this shift towards more positive and inclusive representations in ads is only occurring within more supportive parts of the industry. One participant emphasised:

“I think that agencies that work more in behaviour change, the behaviour change space in social issues will be much more at the forefront and understand and live those values every day. But you are working on the sports bet campaign in the sports bet team. I’m not sure you’re really thinking about female empowerment” – PP#8

5

3.2.5. Finding 5

Change of this nature takes time and the scale of the problem requires long-term commitment and investment.

Evaluation findings indicate that achieving gender equality in advertising is slow and requires a long-term commitment¹⁹ to reach scale. This is consistent with broader evidence that promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence in ways that result in sustained change requires long-term dedication and

commitment. Many initiatives to date have been unable to achieve critical mass due to the time required and the nature of short-term funding and funding arrangements that limit scope, and are also vulnerable to disruption and resistance from many fronts.²⁰ These sentiments were echoed by evaluation participants, who reflected that while the pace of change can be frustrating, it is important to recognise that affecting behavioural, social and culture change requires significant resources, time, and effort:

¹⁹ Respect Victoria (2022), *Progress on Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women in Victoria First Three-Yearly Report to Parliament*, Melbourne: Respect Victoria.

²⁰ Respect Victoria (2022), *Progress on Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women in Victoria First Three-Yearly Report to Parliament*, Melbourne: Respect Victoria.

“I think this is a big issue that won’t be fixed overnight, but by concerted long-term effort, I would equate it to the road safety issue that it won’t go away overnight, but to change behaviours and change attitudes requires a long-term strategy” – PP#7

Indeed, despite the positive impacts shEqual has had, all stakeholders were clear that there is still a long way to go to achieve gender equality in advertising. As one participant emphasised:

“We’re not getting or seeing that kind of shift...I do think there is something in advertising that it hasn’t had some of the same shifts that other industries have had or it hasn’t had the same, I don’t know, me too movement or it hasn’t had the reckoning – PP#2

Participants felt that it was important to build on the work to date, and give the initiative the time it needs to ensure meaningful, lasting change:

“I think the investment in the research has been really valuable for the industry and that like most things it takes time. I believe that the work is only beginning and would hope to see that shEqual is given a chance to continue their great work and use the evaluation results to make changes that would improve impact in the future.”

– survey respondent.



3.3. *Strengths and benefits*

This evaluation identified several key strengths and benefits that have supported the shEqual initiative's successful implementation and contributed to its key achievements. These were: i) involving industry professionals in its governance structures; ii) government support and commitment, iii) the impartial status of WHV as the lead organisation; and iv) the research, rigour and expertise of the project team. These factors have enabled the initiative to be appropriately tailored to its audience and have added to its credibility and trustworthiness.

The Project Reference Group

The shEqual Project Reference Group was perceived as one of the initiative's major strengths which supported the effective delivery of its activities. Comprised of gender equity practitioners, university and local council representatives, and industry professionals, the reference group was a multi-disciplinary expert advisory group that guided the development of key evidence-based resources, practice tools and capacity building activities.

A key theme emerging from interviews was that the reference group enabled the shEqual initiative to co-design its resources and activities, thus ensuring they were tailored to the specific needs and context of the advertising industry. Taking a partnership approach and involving industry members in the project's governance structure also ensured that the initiative was relevant and suitable for its intended audience. As one participant noted:

"It brings the reality of the advertising industry to the table for Women's Health Victoria. I wouldn't expect that they would have a great knowledge of what it's like to work in an advertising agency or in the industry. You need an industry representative for a project like this because you can't expect to create change in an industry without having a grounded understanding of what the issues are, but also the voices within the industry." – PP#8

Project staff also highlighted that working in this way enhanced credibility and trust, leading to greater engagement with industry professionals and agencies more broadly:

"I think the reference group I would say is a big strength. I think that's a big way in and it's kind of fed other pieces of work that we've done and them sort of supporting us gives us validity and trust and reputation and stuff within the industry." – PS#2

Government support and commitment

Stakeholders identified the Victorian Government's support to the initiative and its broader commitment to gender equality as a key strength. They perceived that this contributed to the initiative's credibility and provided an authorising environment for the work to take place:

“I think being backed by government is a real big strength as well...They have so much legitimacy behind ‘em [sic].” – PP#3

By funding the initiative, the government also demonstrated a commitment to gender equality in the advertising industry specifically, which was welcomed by industry stakeholders and the project team alike given it is the only initiative of its kind. Doing so guaranteed the availability of dedicated resources and time to drive this work, given that many industry-led initiatives are delivered in a voluntary capacity. As one participant noted:

“There’s quite a number of groups that are doing work in this space in a voluntary capacity. We do it, we’ve kind of got the funding and the time to do it.” – PS#4

Impartial status of WHV

Another strength that stakeholders identified was the initiative's management by WHV and their organisational commitment to gender equality. Stakeholders reported that it provided an authorising environment for the initiative and helped to build trust with industry stakeholders working to advance gender equity. They emphasised that having WHV lead the initiative provided it with an official status, created a sense that its vision and objectives were authentic, and that it was able to drive gender equality in a meaningful way without being compromised by the industry. As one participant noted:

“Our governing industry body, which is the Advertising Council of Australia, my personal view is that they don’t do a very good job of making our industry a better place... they certainly operate to an agenda that needs to serve the interest of their members that pay big bucks every year to be part of their community. And as a result, things like gender equality and equal pay and just doing better in the DEI space kind of gets bumped down a little bit. So to have an organisation like shEqual that’s really focused and isn’t pushing that agenda is really important and I feel like it was definitely missing before they joined the industry.” – PP#4

Project staff similarly felt that their outsider status enabled them to approach their work with different perspectives from industry initiatives, to be perceived as neutral, and to play a distinct leadership role in advancing gender equity through a focus on advertising:

“We’re sort of separate from the industry. So, I think coming in, we’re not competing with the industry ... people might be, not hesitant, but thinking they’ve got an agenda if you’re from one agency, where we are not. So, I feel like we come in quite neutral so we can see different perspectives and not have that bias maybe.” – PS#2

Research, rigour, and expertise

Participants considered the skills and expertise of the staff involved in designing and delivering the initiative a strength of the shEqual initiative, along with the research and rigour with which the initiative was developed. Participants reflected that as gender equity and violence prevention practitioners, the shEqual team brought a unique skill set and lens to gender equity work in the sector. This included clear strategies for organisational and cultural change. As one participant shared:

“I just love the pipeline that they have between seeing, fixing, achieving gender equality in media and how advertising influences society, which then influences how women are treated and then that linked to domestic violence. I think that is incredible. And that’s in my understanding is their through line and what they want to fix in the end, which no other organisation in this space is doing really....I think that is such a strength and such a great reason to keep pursuing what they’re doing because that’s so important.” – PP#3

Participants also emphasised that the project team’s knowledge of how advertising can influence culture and gender equality had the potential to connect with industry professionals and support them to realise their role in taking action to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion:

“The way they sort of communicate the trickle-down effect of advertising onto culture is really unique. I think that resonates with a lot of creative people that make creative comms because they start to realise their own individual power to influence the work. For example, an art director or a casting director will go, I could literally just be a bit more mindful with the way I cast my ads, and I can create change. So, I think that’s huge.” – PP#4

Additionally, participants highlighted throughout interviews that the research and rigour was a key strength of the initiative. The research was seen as an important lever for change, as it provided industry professionals with the evidence and tools to advocate for change in their own workplaces. As one participant stated:

“The research that has been undertaken has been really valuable... agencies or women in agencies that are agitating for change or people, maybe there are male supporters as well, would be able to quote that research and therefore I see there’s great strength in that.” – PP#6

3.4.

Challenges and limitations

Evaluation findings indicate several challenges that have limited the shEqual initiative's capacity to achieve its objectives, progress gender equal content creation and inclusive workplaces, and to engage more broadly with industry. These were: i) resistance and backlash, ii) uptake and implementation of the initiative's research and resources; iii) branding and messaging; iv) scope of focus and influence; and v) resourcing and capacity.

Resistance and backlash

Stakeholders reported that resistance and backlash was a significant challenge for the shEqual initiative that presents itself in 'many different ways' (PP#5). Participants described a range of ways in which resistance and backlash was experienced or witnessed, including denial and dismissal, hostility, shifting responsibility and accountability, and justification for harmful advertising practices. Industry professionals also perceived the industry to be resistant to any form of change being imposed on them by external actors.

Participants reported that gender inequality was often minimised, dismissed or denied as an issue within the industry. This ranged from leaders and organisations claiming that women in leadership roles was evidence that gender equality has been achieved (rather than perceiving gender inequality as a broad and pervasive structural problem), through to outright dismissal and disregard for its importance. As one participant noted:

"There's people who think, oh, we've already come so far with gender equality, we've already done a lot on that. It's not really, we don't need to do [more]." – PP#2

Failing to understand the structural roots of gender inequality also resulted in backlash and resistance to gender equality workplace initiatives such as quotas:

"There's a bit of a backlash because a lot of agencies have started to proactively or rightly to promote people, women into senior management roles. There's a little bit, I've heard comments like, 'Well, there's no chance of me getting promoted 'cause [sic] I'm the wrong gender or the wrong sex,' so, it's a little bit, that's where the industry is." – PP#7

Shifting responsibility and accountability was another common tactic used to resist progressing gender equality in advertisements and workplaces, including by emphasising issues of gender inequality in other industries:

"I've talked about that [the violence against women research] to them, that the way we portray women and gender roles in advertising has that, and they'll say, yeah, but it's the same for films. And they'll try and still deflect it." – PP#7

Project staff also discussed how industry professionals justify harmful advertising practices as a necessity in their work. As one project staff member stated:

“We do experience the kind of standardised, the standard backlash and resistance even from people who are on the change process around its brands...it’s ‘stereotypes are kind of a tactic that makes it easy for us to communicate messages and we should be able to use them and that’s reality’. And so, we do get kind of the standard backlash that I think happens in all GE work.” – PS#4

Further, industry culture was perceived to contribute to resistance and backlash to the shEqual initiative, given that it is a self-regulating industry that is hostile towards outsiders and resistant to policy and regulation.

“The advertising industry, which I am from, is a very difficult group to play well with because they don’t want to be bound by anybody else’s rules or they definitely are a self-regulating industry, and they really keep the defences up.” – PP#6

Ultimately, participants perceived that resistance and backlash was a significant barrier to the shEqual initiative’s work, which limited engagement between the project team and industry, impacted uptake of resources and tools, and limited shEqual’s capacity to influence widespread positive change and outcomes. This is consistent with broader evidence from the prevention sector that while change is occurring, such initiatives are vulnerable to ongoing resistance²¹. As one participant noted:

“I think the biggest thing is that engagement piece of industry. I don’t think there’s fault with the work and the work that we’re doing. I think it’s the fact that the industry is very reticent to join in and be regulated in any way at all.” – PP#6

3.4.1. Uptake and implementation of research and resources

As discussed throughout the evaluation, achieving greater uptake and implementation of the initiative’s research and resources by industry professionals was a significant challenge. Survey results show that there is some evidence that these are being used by industry professionals, and to a lesser extent shared with others. In interviews, participants emphasised that the research and resources developed were valuable, but that they wanted to see greater use of these outputs.

Findings from the shEqual Impact Survey 2023 showed that over three-quarters of respondents (76.2%) had not used any of shEqual’s research publications in their work, and 82.3% had not shared any of these publications with their peers or networks (Figure 11)²².

²¹ Respect Victoria (2022), *Progress on Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women in Victoria First Three-Yearly Report to Parliament*, Melbourne: Respect Victoria.

²² Data for Figure 11 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions. Thirty-four respondents skipped the question.

shEqual research that has been used and shared

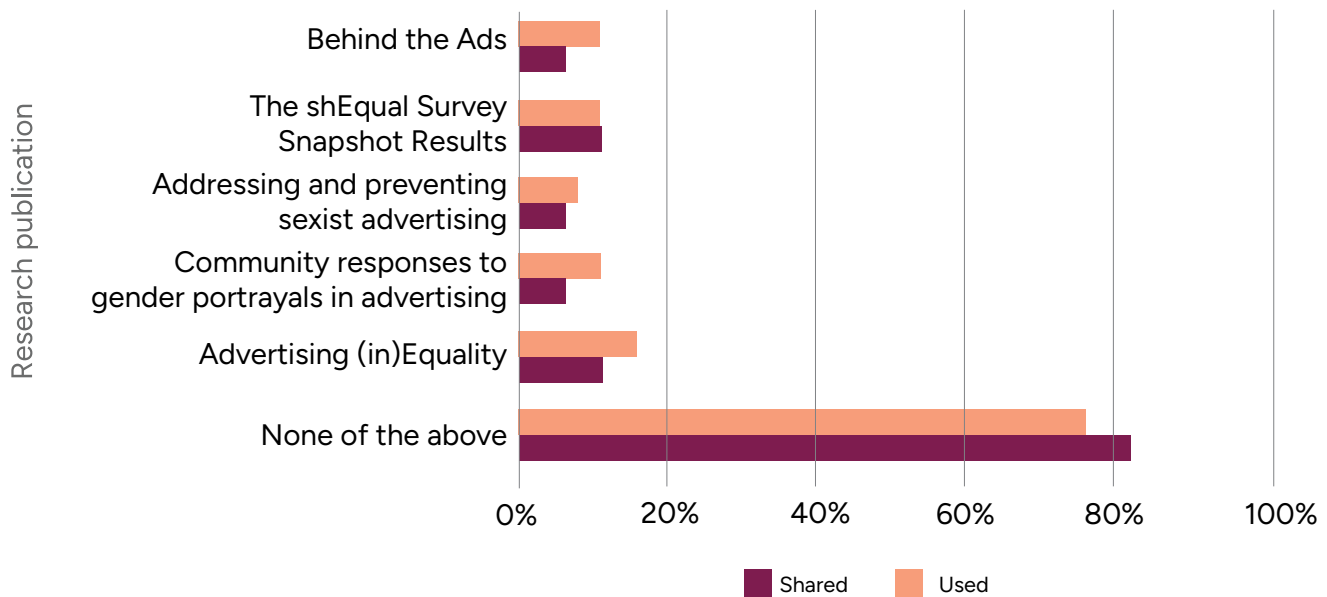


Figure 11: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - use and distribution of shEqual research

Similarly, nearly three-quarters (72.7%) of respondents reported that they had not used any resources produced through the shEqual initiative in their work, and 82.46% had not shared any of these publications with their peers or networks (Figure 12)²³.

Indeed, interview participants emphasised an ongoing need to support industry professionals to use and implement these tools and resources, which the initiative was beginning to shift towards:

“The distribution and the uptake of the training is an area that still needs to be worked on, but certainly there is a lot of content there and available for people to access.” – PP#5

Participants reflected that this would require deeper engagement to support their uptake, beyond promoting them on social media. As one participant reflected:

“The way we communicate it is the thing that needs work and just making it more influential...Maybe we go in and have education sessions or we think a bit more broadly about how we communicate just because there’s just so much advertising and content out there, it’s really hard to get cut through. So perhaps it’s just a whole shift of how we communicate with this and is it in person rather than just putting content out on the internet?” – PP#1

²³ Data for Figure 12 is reported as a percentage of the 63 respondents who completed these questions. Thirty-four respondents skipped the question.

Indeed, the shEqual initiative has taken steps to address this by engaging a creative agency to develop a creative campaign, which aims to address the challenges experienced with industry engagement by updating existing resources and leveraging industry connections to embed these practices within the sector. While the campaign’s implementation fell outside the data collection period for this evaluation report, its development demonstrates the initiative’s commitment to continuous quality improvement and capacity to remain responsive and flexible to arising demands and challenges.

shEqual research that has been used and shared

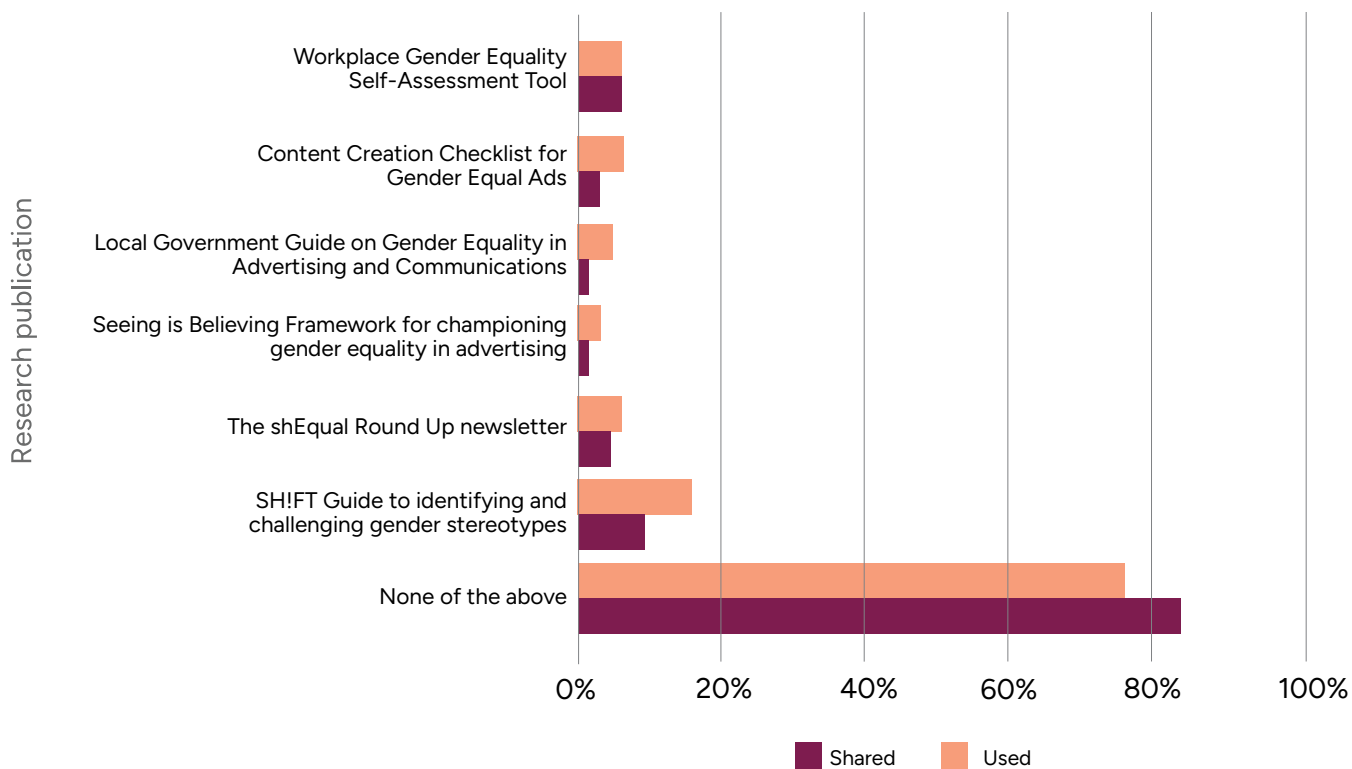


Figure 12: shEqual Impact Survey 2023 results - use and distribution of shEqual resources

3.4.2. Branding and messaging

Another challenge identified for the shEqual initiative was its branding and messaging, which several participants felt was outdated and lacking in visual impact. Participants perceived this had potentially prevented wider engagement with industry professionals, particularly given their high level of visual design and communication skills and expectations about brand quality:

“Even the branding and the look and feel a bit, I guess it was a point in time and that was done, but I know that some – it’s such a contentious sector in terms of people’s views on design, look and feel. Sometimes people actually go, ‘that doesn’t look like what I would think is a really engaging look and feel campaign.’” – PP#2

In addition, the binary and cis-gender normative nature of the initiative’s name was seen as a limitation of the initiative and a major barrier to some agencies engaging with it, given it reinforces gender norms and excludes non-binary and gender diverse people who are just as impacted by gender inequality and discrimination. As one participant reflected:

“I think the name also might throw some people off with getting into very progressive territories now in terms of gender, and I do often wonder if that name is something that may potentially detract people” – PP#1

Some participants also perceived that the initiative’s name alienated some men who may otherwise be supporters, preventing it from gaining greater traction and potentially contributing resistance and backlash. As one participant shared:

“...as time has gone on the name shEqual itself has potentially created a challenge for us in that regard in that there is this...kind of growing allyship space where the allies are a really big part of the change process, and those allies potentially not feeling like that we are set up to support them. And that might present an ongoing challenge for us in engaging men in the work that we do. And it has actually created some backlash from some people in the industry who have at the surface level taken that to mean that shEqual is purely just for women and not about gender equality.” – PS#4

In addition, participants indicated that the shEqual initiative is yet to clearly establish and define its key messages and tone. They noted that the shEqual initiative’s scope is large, and that gender equality is a broad concept that can mean different things to different people. Participants felt that having clear key messages that could be embedded across all communications would help to better engage the industry and build understanding of the initiative’s cause:

“shEqual is so broad. I think we’re trying to tackle a lot of different things and we maybe haven’t nailed the one message that we need to get through. And so, it’s become a bit hard to, I guess go to market, when we don’t have a one thing that we stand for.” – PP#1

For others, the tone of some messages was perceived to potentially alienate the initiative’s intended audience by being too authoritative. As one participant shared:

“There’s a fine line that I think they’re still working out. You want to be this official government body, but at the same time be something someone doesn’t want to switch off to.” – PP#3

Getting the messaging and tone right was perceived to be particularly important given there are several industry-led gender equality initiatives. Participants highlighted that these initiatives have very clear or specific focuses, which makes it easier for them get cut through with their audience and are developed by professionals with high-level design and marketing skills.

Finally, participants discussed incidents in which industry organisations have leveraged the shEqual brand in ways that are misleading and were concerned this could be a continuing problem for the shEqual initiative. For example, key figures or agencies have positioned themselves favourably on matters related to diversity, inclusion and equity, but are doing very little meaningful work to make change or are actively hostile and unsafe workplaces for women and other marginalised groups.

“It’s just something that stands out for me is as we try to engage industry... because I know the dirty underbelly of advertising, I would often know, oh, here we are, we’re getting a Weinstein kind of figure to be on a panel. And it’s like they’re woke washing themselves and their agency that has a stinking reputation and history. And so that sort of exploitation of this to try to virtue signal to people that there was nothing to see here after #MeToo happened.” – PP#6

It was noted that this was particularly challenging for the shEqual project team who, as outsiders to the industry, may not have access to insider knowledge regarding which places are authentic in their commitments to gender equality and which ones are not. This highlights the importance of partnerships and regular communication with industry members. As one participant shared:

“Being not in the industry leaves us vulnerable to not understanding some of the relationships and the nuances and some of the hidden secrets that’s going on. And even though we do have the reference group, we still are that level removed that we don’t understand what they understand.” – PS#3

3.4.3. Scope of focus and influence

Another limitation that has affected the shEqual initiative's impact was its scope of focus and influence. The funding arrangements that guided shEqual's work and to which the initiative must adhere had set boundaries around its scope of work and influence. As a Victorian Government funded initiative, it was required to focus on and deliver its work in Victoria. This was perceived to have limited broader industry engagement given advertising is a national industry. As one participant reflected:

“Because it’s a state-based initiative and advertising is a national based industry, I think there’s a little bit of that limits its potential to make impact because a lot of the big agencies have offices across all states. So, I think it, it’s hard for it to have traction outside of Melbourne.” – PP#6

In addition, the funding arrangement included contractual conditions that prevented shEqual from focusing on particular kinds of advertising, such as gambling and alcohol. This significantly constrained the impact shEqual could have on sexist advertising, given these industries are often producing the most sexist ads. As one participant stated:

“It also limits us in what we can and can’t talk about. It limits us in not being able to talk about alcohol and gambling ads, which are some of the first degree just, sexist offenders in advertising content.” – PS#3

Further, participants identified policy and regulation as an essential component of any efforts to drive systemic culture change across the industry. This, however, was largely perceived to sit outside of shEqual's scope of influence, given that the initiative is required to focus on and deliver its work in Victoria, which is likely to limit its influence of policy and regulation at a national level and therefore industry-wide change. Participants also acknowledged that increasing advocacy for policy change may jeopardise the trust and relationships that have been established with industry partners, and that providing direct support to industry to adapt to regulatory changes would be important for success in this space:

“I actually do think that we need to be working in the regulatory space. And once we can do that, I think the role for us to play is supporting the industry to adapt, to understand first, and then to adapt to that change and being there to continue to be that sort of resource of support.” – PS#4

Finally, participants spoke of the challenges posed by the increasing use of digital platforms for advertising purposes, which currently sit outside the shEqual initiative's scope of work.

“We’re limited by keeping it within Australia and what is created here and also limited with focusing on agencies instead of brands. And even just focusing on brands – there are a lot of sexist ads created that appear exclusively on Instagram and TikTok... we don’t have any control over how and where they’re created or any transparency around that.” – PS#3

The policy successes that the shEqual initiative has achieved to date despite these challenges and resourcing constraints is reflective of the shEqual team's skills and expertise, and broader interest in the initiative.

3.4.4. Resourcing and capacity

The final theme that participants identified which had limited the shEqual initiative's reach and impact was its resourcing and implementation capacity. The project team emphasised that short-term funding cycles limit their ability to plan over the long-term, which is critical for initiatives like shEqual that require sustained effort to affect meaningful social and culture change. Staff described how a considerable amount of their time was spent advocating for ongoing funding or securing new funds, which could otherwise be spent on scaling-up the initiative:

“It takes up a lot of time in the team dedicated to try and get more funding when we could be dedicating that time to doing the work. I feel like it's sort of taking away some of that.” – PS#2

They also expressed concern that insecure funding jeopardised both the initiative's reputation within the industry and the relationships that have been established. It was felt that if the initiative was not refunded, the project could become stagnant, which would compromise existing industry relationships, undermine trust and interrupt the momentum shEqual has built to progress gender equality in advertising settings. They emphasised that this risk was particularly high given the disclosures they have received through the initiative, and the expectations they have created about driving change in the industry. As one participant shared:

“There's a risk if we don't get funded and things scale back and then we might get funding in the future, how that impacts the reputation in the industry. They might not want to work with us as much, ‘Oh, you left last time’, or ‘We haven't seen you round in a while,’...The funding cycle's just a huge limitation, and risk, actually, to the work that we're doing.” – PS#2

Insecure funding also posed ongoing challenges and risks to recruiting and retaining a skilled team to drive the initiative's implementation and maintain momentum, due to job insecurity:

“One [risk] is about losing a skilled team and also linked to that is about losing the momentum of the current and future work.” – PS#4

These challenges were also observed by industry stakeholders, who how early staff turnover had affected implementation, and highlighted how a lack of resourcing limited the team's capacity. As participant noted:

“There was so much more that we wanted to do, but I got the feeling that they were just so overwhelmed and under-resourced that a lot of the things that we suggested were never followed through.” – PP#7

Finally, participants identified that industry engagement with the shEqual initiative had been affected by resourcing and capacity issues within the advertising industry itself. Participants noted that industry-led grassroots initiatives are generally created and led by women in unpaid capacities, on top of their paid roles in the industry. In addition, the industry professionals who were supportive of and interested in participating in the shEqual initiative are generally expected to do so on top of their workload or in their personal time. As one participant shared:

“There’s a lot of causes at the moment. And so, it’s a bit of like, well, yeah, I guess there’s only so much emotional and mental capacity that people that work in the industry can put in. Being underpaid, being worked to the bone is very common in the industry. So, it’s like, okay, well what’s my thing that I care about?” – PP#1



4

Conclusion & *Recommendations*

4.1. *Conclusion*

As the only dedicated, evidence-based initiative in Australia working with the advertising industry to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence, the shEqual initiative is creating a unique settings-based movement for change. Demonstrating its success, the shEqual initiative has effectively engaged industry supporters of gender equality and, more recently through its advocacy, key decision and policy makers to build momentum to address sexist advertising and its harms over a short period of time. The initiative has also achieved its first objective to establish the evidence-base, produced extensive outputs as intended, and improved understanding and confidence among industry professionals engaged in the initiative to promote gender equality, thereby contributing to key state and federal government gender equality outcomes. The expertise and skillset of the team combined with these successes provide the shEqual initiative with a strong foundation to continue driving this work.

It is important to note that while the shEqual initiative's overall impact on gender equality in advertising has not been as extensive or clear as desired, and as highlighted in this evaluation, cultural change requires a significant investment of time and resources, is complex to measure and requires a multi-faceted, generational approach. Given the advertising industry is one part of the broader primary prevention architecture, and the shEqual initiative is the only evidence-based initiative working in this space, it is crucial that shEqual continues to leverage existing evidence and frameworks to drive this work, including its foundational framework *Seeing is Believing*.

Indeed, the challenges associated with primary prevention work to drive long-term cultural change manifested for the shEqual initiative through resistance and backlash and resourcing and capacity. Interrelated to these challenges were the uptake and use of resources by industry professionals, the initiative's branding and messaging, and its scope of focus and influence. These findings, as well as those related to the initiative's strengths and successes, illustrate the importance of identifying existing leaders and champions of gender equality within new settings, developing multi-disciplinary and intersectoral partnerships to implement evidence-based work, and implementing strategies for managing and responding to resistance and backlash. Importantly, they also point to the need for sustained and long-term investment to drive and achieve lasting change.

Ultimately, the shEqual initiative presents a feasible, evidence-based approach to drive the cultural change required to promote gender equality in advertising settings and prevent gender-based violence. The momentum and relationships built through the initiative, the research, resources, and tools that have been developed, and the team's expertise and skillset could be leveraged to expand on the initiative and achieve industry-wide change, with significant implications for gender equality.

4.2. *Recommendations*

The following recommendations are based on the evaluation findings presented in this report, and will be dependent on sufficient, secure and long-term funding for the initiative.

Funding

Secure long-term and ongoing funding for the shEqual initiative to maintain existing partnerships and momentum, build on successes to date and achieve sustained change across the three pillars identified in Seeing is Believing.

Policy and regulation

Expand the shEqual initiative's remit to include all forms of advertising and paid content, noting the importance of online and social media advertising and influencers in the context of harmful advertising.

Broaden the shEqual initiative's scope to include harmful advertising targeted to men that includes rigid and limiting male stereotypes.

Capitalise on momentum built in 2024 engaging key influencers and decision makers, including Federal Members of Parliament and stakeholders with public profile, to continue raising awareness of the impacts of sexist ads and lead advocacy work to generate support for and drive legislative and regulatory reform.

Ensure the shEqual initiative aligns and contributes to key federal government policy frameworks, including the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 and Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality, as well as reforms to address online harms and other advertising regulation, such as gambling.

Continue to undertake relevant research to support legislative and regulatory change, including an analysis of current regulatory codes and community/industry consultation on other proposed models of regulation.

Communications

Develop a comprehensive communication strategy and plan in consultation with industry professionals that articulates clear key messages to be embedded across all communications, identifies targeted audiences for specific activities to recognise the breadth and diversity within the industry and the need for tailored approaches, and which contains clear guidance on the voice and tone to be used in communications.

Rebrand the initiative so that it is inclusive and does not reinforce gender binaries.

Industry engagement and partnerships

Continue momentum built in 2024 through capacity building activities, including Gender Equality in Advertising and Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces training packages, and harness existing policy levers to drive industry engagement with the shEqual initiative as an available resource to support the industry to meet existing obligations, including under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Build on, formalise and expand partnerships with grassroots gender equity initiatives to coordinate collaborative action and develop and implement industry campaigns.

Develop initiatives to engage men in the industry, such as allyship programs.

Implement an industry award and ceremony for progressive portrayals in advertising and/or a scorecard system for gender equality in advertising to showcase good practice examples.

Continue momentum built in 2024 through capacity building activities, including Gender Equality in Advertising and Gender Equality in Advertising Workplaces training packages, and harness existing policy levers to drive industry engagement with the shEqual initiative as an available resource to support the industry to meet existing obligations, including under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Research and evaluation

Subject to sufficient longer-term funding, build the evidence-base demonstrating the frequency of exposure to harmful ads, and how this contributes harmful attitudes and behaviours, and poorer health outcomes.

Review and refresh the shEqual initiative's objectives as needed to ensure that they are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound for effective evaluation, and consider separating out objectives for industry and community engagement.

Use the Theory of Change to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan with a strengthened focus on impact measures and outcomes, and including appropriate systems for streamlined and consistent program monitoring and evaluation.

SHIFT

by shEqual

“I think this is a big issue that won’t be fixed overnight, but by concerted long-term effort... to change behaviours and change attitudes requires a long-term strategy”

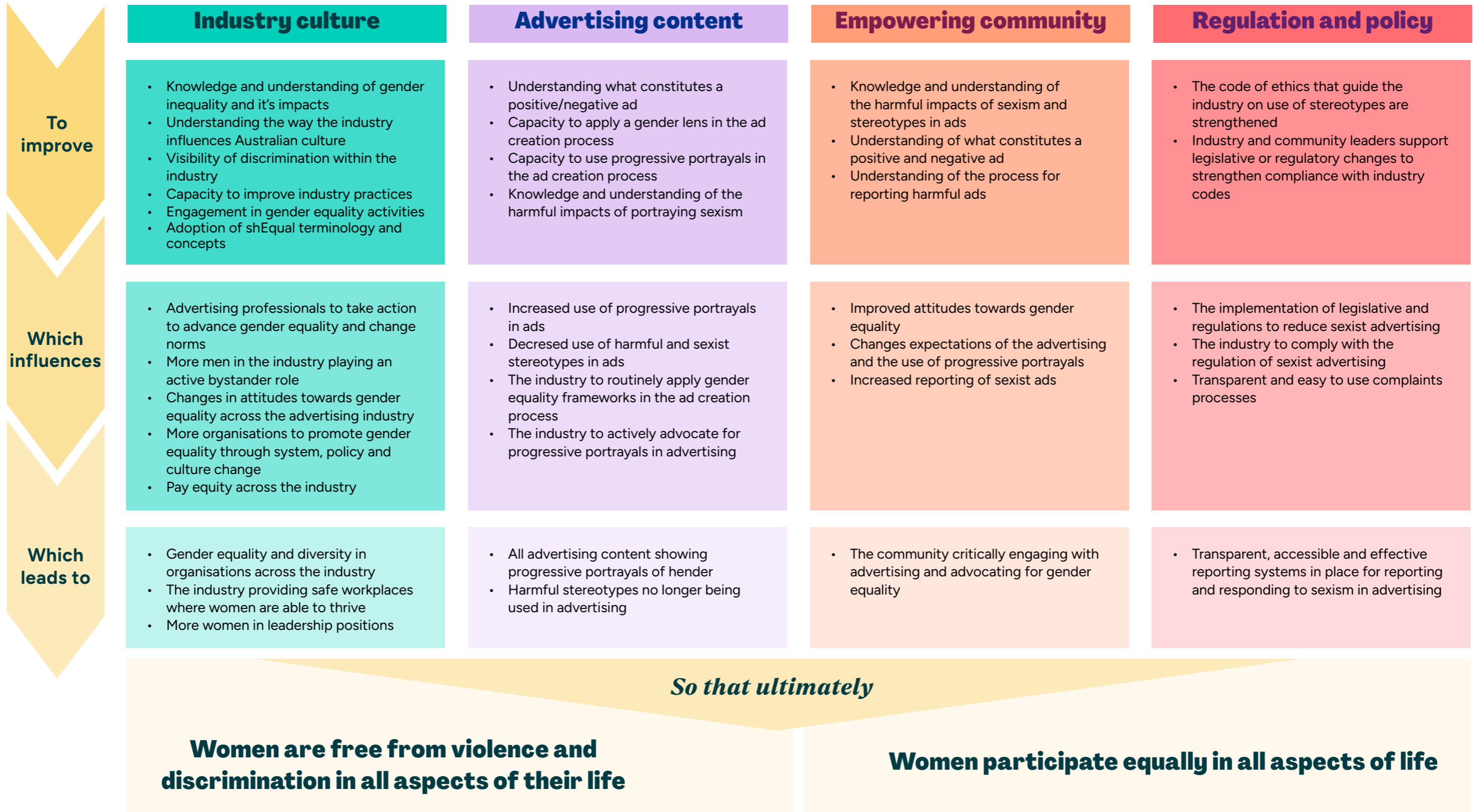
– PP#7



Appendix

We use the following strategies

- Research and evidence creation
- Strategic action framework
- Facilitate partnerships and engagement
- Develop resources
- Build capacity and capability
- Communications and campaigns
- Support policy change
- Build and promote the shEqual brand



Appendix 2: shEqual Consultation Guide (Project Staff)

Introductions

Thank you for taking part in this consultation to share your experiences and perspectives on the shEqual Initiative.

My name is Anita Trezona, Managing Director of Trezona Consulting Group and Women's Health Victoria has engaged us to undertake an independent evaluation of the shEqual initiative.

About the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation is to determine the impact of the shEqual initiative on gender equality in the advertising setting. The evaluation will cover the period from 2020-2024, including a focus on:

- The extent to which it has addressed its stated objectives
- Its impact on gender equality in the advertising sector
- Extent to which it has successfully engaged the advertising sector as partners

This is one of several consultations we will be conducting with stakeholders and partners over the next month, and the information you share will inform our overall assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the shEqual initiative.

The information you share today will be treated with sensitivity, and your personal views will not be shared outside of this room. We may include quotes in the final report to highlight the key findings, but will only do so with your consent.

- Consent to be audio recorded?
- Consent to be quoted anonymously?

Do you have any questions before we start?

Question		Notes
1	Tell me about the shEqual initiative – what sets it apart from other gender equality initiative?	
2	What have been the main elements of the initiative? → What adaptations have you made along the way? Why?	
3	What do you see as the key strengths of the shEqual initiative?	
4	What have been the main limitations of the initiative?	
5	How would you describe the level of industry awareness and engagement with the shEqual initiative? → Who is/is not engaging with it?	
6	What progress/change has occurred across the industry as a result of shEqual? → What has been the biggest impact to date?	
7	Have there been any unexpected opportunities or outcomes arising from the shEqual initiative?	
8	What are the major challenges of promoting GE in the industry?	
9	Thinking about the next phase of the initiative, what do you see as the biggest opportunities for shEqual to extend its impact? → What could you be doing more of/better?	
10	Do you have any final comments?	

Appendix 3: shEqual Consultation Guide (Reference Group)

Introductions

Thank you for taking part in this consultation to share your experiences and perspectives on the shEqual Initiative.

My name is Anita Trezona, Managing Director of Trezona Consulting Group and Women's Health Victoria has engaged us to undertake an independent evaluation of the shEqual initiative.

About the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation is to determine the impact of the shEqual initiative on gender equality in the advertising setting. The evaluation will cover the period from 2020-2024, including a focus on:

- The extent to which it has addressed its stated objectives
- Its impact on gender equality in the advertising sector
- Extent to which it has successfully engaged the advertising sector as partners

This is one of several consultations we will be conducting with stakeholders and partners over the next month, and the information you share will inform our overall assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the shEqual initiative.

The information you share today will be treated with sensitivity, and your personal views will not be shared outside of this room. We may include quotes in the final report to highlight the key findings, but will only do so with your consent.

- Consent to be audio recorded? Yes
- Consent to be quoted anonymously? Yes

Do you have any questions before we start?

Start recording

Question		Notes
1	In what ways have you been involved in the shEqual initiative, and over what period?	
2	What have been the benefits of having a Reference Group? → How effective has it been for engaging Industry as partners?	
3	How would you describe the level of industry awareness and engagement with the shEqual initiative?	
4	What do you see as the key strengths of the shEqual initiative?	
5	Thinking broadly, what progress/change has occurred across the industry as a result of shEqual?	
6	What have been some of the key challenges promoting GE across the industry?	
7	Have there been any unexpected opportunities or outcomes from your involvement in shEqual?	
8	Thinking about the next phase of the initiative, what do you see as the biggest opportunities for shEqual to extend its impact?	
9	Do you have any final comments?	

Appendix 4: shEqual Consultation Guide (Grassroots)

Introductions

Thank you for taking part in this consultation to share your experiences and perspectives on the shEqual Initiative.

My name is Anita Trezona, Managing Director of Trezona Consulting Group and Women's Health Victoria has engaged us to undertake an independent evaluation of the shEqual initiative.

About the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation is to determine the impact of the shEqual initiative on gender equality in the advertising setting. The evaluation will cover the period from 2020-2024, including a focus on:

- The extent to which it has addressed its stated objectives
- Its impact on gender equality in the advertising sector
- Extent to which it has successfully engaged the advertising sector as partners

This is one of several consultations we will be conducting with stakeholders and partners over the next month, and the information you share will inform our overall assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the shEqual initiative.

The information you share today will be treated with sensitivity, and your personal views will not be shared outside of this room. We may include quotes in the final report to highlight the key findings, but will only do so with your consent.

- Consent to be audio recorded? Yes
- Consent to be quoted anonymously? Yes

Do you have any questions before we start?

Start recording

Question		Notes
1	In what ways have you collaborated with/been involved in the shEqual initiative?	
2	What have been the benefits of partnering with shEqual?	
3	How would you describe the level of industry awareness and engagement with the shEqual initiative?	
4	What do you see as the key strengths of the shEqual initiative?	
5	Thinking broadly, what progress/change has occurred across the industry as a result of shEqual?	
6	What have been some of the key challenges promoting GE across the industry?	
7	Have there been any unexpected opportunities or outcomes from your involvement in shEqual?	
8	Thinking about the next phase of the initiative, what do you see as the biggest opportunities for shEqual to extend its impact?	
9	Do you have any final comments?	

Appendix 5: shEqual Impact Survey 2023

shEqual Survey

We are conducting this survey as part of an independent evaluation of the shEqual Initiative.

The aim of the evaluation is to determine the impact of the shEqual initiative on gender equality in the advertising setting.

The evaluation will span the 2020-2024 implementation period, and will include a focus on:

- The extent to which the initiative has addressed its objectives
- Its impact on gender equality in the advertising sector
- Engagement of the advertising sector in the initiative

Who is this survey for?

Anyone who works in the advertising industry or in an advertising related role in Australia can participate in this survey.

Consent

By completing this survey you are providing consent to participate in the evaluation.

This survey is anonymous and your responses are confidential.

Contact

If you would like more information about this survey or the shEqual evaluation, please contact the lead evaluator:

Dr Anita Trezona

Email:

Mobile:

Demographics

Before we get started, we just need to ask a few questions about your connection to the Australian advertising industry.

Question	Format and response options
Do you currently work in the advertising industry in Australia in relation to:	<p>Multiple choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing, creating, or producing advertising or communications content? • Buying/commissioning advertising or communications content (i.e., working as a marketing or brand manager who commissions ads)? • Other advertising related work • None of the above (screen out)
Which of the following best describes the type of organisation you work for? [Please select all that apply]	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising agency / creative agency • Client / buyer of advertising • Media owner • Media agency • Specialist agency/consultancy • PR agency • Branding • Digital • I am/was a freelancer • Other (please specify)
Which of the following best describes the type of work you do within your organisation? [Please select all that apply]	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative • Marketing • Production • Studio • Client Services • Management • Planning / strategy • Other (please specify)

Demographics

Before we get started, we just need to ask a few questions about your connection to the Australian advertising industry.

<p>How long have you worked in or around the advertising industry?</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than a year • 1 -< 2 years • 2 -< 5 years • 5 -< 10 years • 10 -< 15 years • 15 -< 20 years • 20 years or more
<p>How would you describe your role in terms of seniority?</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior • Middle • Senior • Other (please specify)
<p>What is your gender?</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman • Man • Non-binary • Agender • Gender-fluid • Prefer to self-describe (please specify)
<p>What is your age?</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 18 • 18 - 24 • 25 - 29 • 30 - 34 • 35 - 39 • 40 - 44 • 45 - 49 • 50 - 54 • 55 - 59 • 60 or over

Demographics

Before we get started, we just need to ask a few questions about your connection to the Australian advertising industry.

<p>Do you identify with any of the following groups? [Please select all that apply]</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander • LGBTQIA+ • Living with a disability • Other identity (please tell us) • Prefer not to say • None of the above
<p>What state or territory do you live in?</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New South Wales • ACT • Victoria • Queensland • Western Australia • South Australia • Tasmania • Northern Territory • Prefer not to say

Gender equality in the advertising industry

<p>What does 'gender equality' mean to you?</p> <p>This doesn't have to be specific to the advertising industry – we're most interested in your general definition of the term.</p>	<p>Open text box</p>
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Gender equality in the advertising industry

<p>To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to advertising?</p>	<p>Matrix, five-point agreement scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has a role to play in influencing the ads we create and commission • It's important to me to feel proud of the ads my workplace makes/commissions [vary wording depending on whether respondent is agency or client] • I always feel proud of the ads my workplace makes/commissions • Better representation of all genders makes better ads • Advertising is a powerful influence on society • The Australian advertising industry prioritises gender equality as a workplace issue • The Australian advertising industry prioritises addressing gender equality in advertising content • The saying "sex sells" is often true
<p>In order to support gender equality, how important do you believe it is that advertising...</p>	<p>Matrix, five-point importance scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features respectful depictions of women • Features realistic depictions of women • Depicts women engaging in a wide variety of activities • Depicts a diversity of women

<h2>Gender equality in the advertising industry</h2>	
<p>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to advertising?</p>	<p>Matrix, five-point agreement scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising containing gender stereotypes of women contributes to poor body image in women • Advertising containing gender stereotypes of women contributes to violence against women • Advertising containing gender stereotypes of women contributes to poor mental health in women • Advertising that sexualises and objectifies women contributes to poor body image in women • Advertising that sexualises and objectifies women contributes to violence against women • Advertising that sexualises and objectifies women contributes to poor mental health in women
<p>What level of responsibility do you believe each of these groups should have for promoting gender equality in advertising content in Australia?</p>	<p>Matrix, 3-point scale (None, a little, a lot)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency employees • Agency management • Industry bodies • Client management • Client employees • Consumers • Government

Gender equality in your work	
<p>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to your work in and around the Australian advertising industry?</p>	<p>Matrix, five-point agreement scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My current role gives me the opportunity to promote gender equality in my workplace • My current role gives me the opportunity to promote gender equality in advertising content • I would feel comfortable raising concerns at work about an issue involving gender equality in the workplace • I would feel comfortable raising concerns at work about gender equality in advertising content • In general, I think men are paid more than women in similar roles in my industry
<p>Have any of the following experiences ever prevented you from speaking up about gender equality in your workplace?</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that it wasn't serious enough to speak up about • Feeling that you didn't have enough experience to do so • Feeling that you weren't in a senior enough role to do so • Feeling that it wasn't your place to do so • Feeling that you were in a minority on the issue • Having had a previous negative experience when speaking up about the issue • Feeling concerned there would be negative consequences for you if you spoke up
<p>Tell us about any negative experiences you have had speaking up about gender equality in the workplace.</p>	<p>Open text box</p>
<p>Tell us about any negative experiences you have had speaking up about other forms of inequality or discrimination in the workplace.</p>	<p>Open text box</p>

Gender equality in your work

<p>How much would the following encourage you to speak up in your workplace about gender equality in advertising?</p>	<p>Matrix, five-point scale (not at all, slightly, moderately, very, extremely)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witnessing others speaking up about gender equality • Having research to back up my position • More men actively supporting gender equality • My employer having policies and/or initiatives in support of gender equality • My industry having policies and/or initiatives in support of gender equality • Having tools and resources to support gender equality in the ads I am making
<p>Have you ever participated in any of the following activities around gender equality? [Please select all that apply]</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended an event (in-person or online) about gender equality • Participated in a workplace discussion about gender equality • Supported a workplace initiative about gender equality • Posting something on social media about gender equality • Never participated in any activities relating to gender equality • Something else (please describe)
<p>What other kind of workplace initiatives have you supported?</p>	<p>Open text box</p>

Gender equality in your work	
<p>How would you feel about your employer taking the following actions to support gender equality?</p>	<p>Matrix, six-point scale (strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, neither support or oppose, somewhat support, strongly support, NA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a pay audit to identify any gender pay discrimination • Setting targets or quotas for gender representation at senior levels • Not working with/for clients with a poor record on gender equality [only display to agency side] • Not working with/for agencies with a poor record on gender equality [only display to client side] • Reviewing content for potential gender equality issues • Providing training on gender equality • Providing tools and resources to support inclusion of gender equality in your work • Reviewing work processes to ensure they are gender equitable (e.g., gender equal creative/ pitch teams, casting, etc.)
<p>Has your organisation implemented any gender equality policies or procedures in the past 2 years?</p>	<p>Yes/No/Unsure</p>
<p>Has your organisation implemented any other organisational change initiative to support gender equality in the past 2 years?</p>	<p>Yes /No/Unsure</p>
<p>If your organisation has implemented an organisational change initiative in the past 2 years, briefly describe it.</p>	<p>Open text box <i>Only if answered yes to above</i></p>
<p>What other actions, if any, do you believe are necessary to improve gender equality in advertising?</p>	<p>Open text box</p>

Gender equality in your work	
Have you personally experienced discrimination in your workplace based on any of the following factors: [Please select all that apply]	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My gender • My race or ethnicity • My sexuality • My age • My disability • Pregnancy or parenting responsibilities
If you feel comfortable, briefly tell us about the nature of the discrimination you experienced	<p>Open text box</p>

Engagement in the shEqual initiative	
How did you hear about shEqual? [Please select all that apply]	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have never heard of shEqual • Social media • The shEqual website • The shEqual newsletter • Promotional email about a shEqual event • Through a colleague • Through another advertising agency • In an industry publication • Other (please specify)
Have you participated in any of these shEqual events or activities? [Please select all that apply]	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have never participated in a shEqual event or activity • Completed a shEqual Online Training • Attended an interactive training workshop • Attended a shEqual leadership forum • Listened to or viewed the shEqual podcast series • Other shEqual events or campaigns (please specify)

Engagement in the shEqual initiative

<p>Have you used any of the following shEqual research in your work? [Please select all that apply]</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising (In)Equality: The impacts of sexist advertising on women’s health and wellbeing (2018) • Community responses to gender portrayals in advertising: A research paper (2019) • Addressing and preventing sexist advertising: A snapshot of promising practice (2019) • The shEqual Survey Snapshot Results: Perceptions of gender equality in Australian advertising • Behind the Ads: Advertising Professionals’ Perspectives on Gender Equality in the Workplace • None of the above
<p>Have you shared any of the following shEqual research with your peers or networks? [Please select all that apply]</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising (In)Equality: The impacts of sexist advertising on women’s health and wellbeing (2018) • Community responses to gender portrayals in advertising: A research paper (2019) • Addressing and preventing sexist advertising: A snapshot of promising practice (2019) • The shEqual Survey Snapshot Results: Perceptions of gender equality in Australian advertising • Behind the Ads: Advertising Professionals’ Perspectives on Gender Equality in the Workplace • None of the above

Engagement in the shEqual initiative	
<p>Have you used any of the following shEqual resources in your work? [Please select all that apply]</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SH!FT Guide to identifying and challenging gender stereotypes in ads • The shEqual Round Up Newsletter • Seeing is Believing Framework for championing gender equality in advertising • Local Government Guide on Gender Equality in Advertising and Communications • Content Creation Checklist for Gender Equal Ads • Workplace Gender Equality Self-Assessment Tool • None of the above
<p>Have you shared any of the following shEqual research with your peers or networks? [Please select all that apply]</p>	<p>Check box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SH!FT Guide to identifying and challenging gender stereotypes in ads • The shEqual Round Up Newsletter • Seeing is Believing Framework for championing gender equality in advertising • Local Government Guide on Gender Equality in Advertising and Communications • Content Creation Checklist for Gender Equal Ads • Workplace Gender Equality Self-Assessment Tool • None of the above
<p>To what extent do you believe people across the advertising industry are aware of the shEqual initiative?</p>	<p>Five-point scale (not at all, slightly, moderately, very, unsure)</p>

Engagement in the shEqual initiative

<p>To what extent do you believe shEqual has influenced change across the industry in relation to?</p>	<p>Matrix, five-point scale (not at all, slightly, moderately, very, unsure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved people’s knowledge about gender equality• Improved people’s knowledge about the harmful impacts of sexism and stereotypes in ads• Improved people’s understanding of the role they can play in influencing gender equal ad creation• Increased use of authentic and diverse representations of all people in advertising in advertising• Decreased use of sexist ads• Increased commitment to creating gender equal advertising workplaces
<p>Do you have any additional comments about the impact of shEqual on gender equality in advertising?</p>	<p>Open text box</p>

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